

SEE THE "ST. JIM'S NEWS" INSIDE!

The GEM 1¹/₂

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LIBRARY

20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

August 13th, 1921.



MYSTIFYING THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S.

(An incident from the grand long complete story of the Boys of St. Jim's.)

EDITORIAL.

My Dear Readers,—

In this excellent number of the "Gem" you will find the first issue of the "St. Jim's News," edited by Tom Merry. Each week this feature will contain many items about St. Jim's and the

popular characters that are certain to interest you all. I am sure the "St. Jim's News" will appeal to old and new readers alike, for the special information and glimpses of history of the old school which it will provide is bound to add considerable interest to the stories in the "Gem." In addition to answering the purpose of a guide-book, it will contain contributions written by your favourite characters. Next week there will be

another interesting issue of Tom Merry's famous weekly, so look out for it! Many readers have asked for another story dealing with Glyn, the inventor, and I am pleased to say that one will appear in our next issue. This amusing story is undoubtedly one of the finest I have read for a long time, and I am sure you will all agree with me when you get the next number of your favourite paper.

YOUR EDITOR.

ANSWERS TO READERS.

ERIC W. D. V. (Worthing).—The characters you mention will all be sure to turn up in time. But don't forget to keep your eyes open for them. Missing even one week's copy may mean you have missed the very person you wanted to hear about.

H. ZECH (Annadale, Sydney).—I feel quite honoured to receive a letter from such an old supporter as yourself. I very much welcomed your reminder, and would like to hear from you again. I think it is the custom in most big public schools for the scholars to address each other by their surnames, and St. Jim's is no exception. Of course, mind you, the occupants of one study, when all

together, would certainly converse in the usual manner, and call each other by Christian or nicknames.

"MY CHUM BEAT" (Manchester).—Many thanks for the short note, and also for the hint you enclosed. No; Cardew cannot edit an issue of the supplement you mention, as he has no connection whatever with any paper but the "Gem." By this time I expect the "St. Jim's News" will be appearing in the "Gem," and a stage-whisper to you in advance will be unnecessary. Don't forget, though, that our erratic hero will sub-edit any issue he feels inclined to.

MISS BARBARA R. (Redlands, Dorling).—Another lover of Ralph Cardew! You state that we cannot have too much of the dandy—that you are never tired of reading about him. Well, you can take it that I shan't give you a chance to "Cardew and the Campers" ought to have met with all your expectations of R. R. C. on holidays. What did you think of it? The best advice I can

give you if you wish to become acquainted with the glorious adventures of the boys of St. Jim's in bygone days is to follow Cousin Ethel's "History of St. Jim's," in "The St. Jim's News," which will appear every week. The next Special Number will in all probability deal with either Tom Merry, D'Arcy, or Talbot.

GERALD S. (Cardiff).—The average height of Sixth Form boys is five feet eleven inches. The Fifth is five feet nine. The following are the individual heights and ages you requested: Kildare: six feet, seventeen years ten months. Baker: five feet ten, eighteen years two months. Darrel: five feet ten and a half, seventeen years nine months. Knox: six feet one in socks, eighteen years seven months. Cutts of the Fifth is five feet nine, and seventeen years six months. St. Leger: six feet, seventeen years nine months. Gilmore: five feet eight and a half, sixteen years eleven months. Lefever: five feet ten, and seventeen years old. I think that is the lot, my chum.

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Tom Merry's Mission

A Grand, Long Complete Story of the Chums of St. Jim's.
By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER I. Astounding News!

HOW'S the money market?" Tom Merry asked that question rather anxiously, as the Terrible Three gathered in Study No. 10. Manners and Lowther looked decidedly glum.

"I'm stony!" announced Manners.

"Haven't got a stiver to my name," said Monty Lowther, "unless a tuppenny stamp without any gum on the back of it is of any use."

"Ha, ha! Not much!"

As a City man would express it, there was a state of insolvency in Study No. 10. Funds rose and fell with as many fluctuations as in the Stock market. Yesterday, Study No. 10 had been a land flowing with milk and honey. Just now there was a drought in the land, and the exchequer, like Mother Hubbard's famous cupboard, was bare.

The chums of the Shell had intended visiting Rainbridge—a town some eight miles distant—that afternoon, which was Wednesday and a half-holiday, to witness the great cricket match between the county eleven and a touring team, whose name had become a household word in the realm of sport. The news of this match had come suddenly, and, as is usually the case, when funds were at their lowest ebb. These were the lean days for the Terrible Three.

Tom Merry went through his pockets again, in the vain hope that he might have overlooked something. Monty Lowther unearthed a French halfpenny stuck to a chunk of toffee. All Manners turned out of his pockets was a penknife, several nibs, a piece of sealing-wax, and a whistle. It was a varied and interesting collection, but there was no cash amongst it.

"Oh dear!" said Tom Merry. "Is that the lot? Here's a giddy go and no mistake! But perhaps Miss Priscilla has sent me something. There's still a forlorn hope. Let's go down and meet the postman. He's about due now."

The Terrible Three left their study and went downstairs. Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the chums of the Fourth, were standing on the School House steps as the Shell fellows emerged from the door.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "Come to look for the postman? We're on the same lay. You see, there's no money in the till, and we'd made up our minds to go to Rainbridge to see the match. Gussy, the burbling ass, didn't receive a fiver this morning."

"Weally, Blake, I wufuse to be wuferred to as a burblin' ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his monocle indignantly upon Blake. "I have no ontwolt ovah my patah! I wote to him on Monday, distinctly pwessin' for a fivah. Weally, he is fwightfully unresponfive!"

Jack Blake grunted.

"He may have sent it this morning," he said. "That's why we're looking for the postman. Gussy's fiver is our last hope. If it doesn't come we'll mop up the quad with him."

"Bai Jove! Blake, you feahful boundah!" gasped the noble swell of St. Jim's, pushing back his cuffs in a warlike manner. "I wogard your wemark as oppwobwous in the extreme. Unless you apologise, as fwom one gentleman to another, I shall wezard it as my painful duty to administrah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Peace, my infants, peace!" said Tom Merry chidingly. "Here comes Blaggy!"

Blaggy, the village postman, came up, a sheaf of letters in his hand.

"Hallo, Blaggy, old bun!" exclaimed Monty Lowther effusively, plying the postman's left hand as though it was a

pump-handle. "You are as welcome as the flowers in May. Tommy, where's that threepence? If Blaggy has brought us any letters, we'll award him the threepence as a mark of our esteem and blessing!"

Blaggy managed to wrench his hand free at last, and gasped. Next minute he was quite surrounded by the eager juniors.

"Letter for Master D'Arcy," he said.

"Oh, how wipping!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Twot it out, deah boy!"

The Terrible Three regarded Blaggy's letters with anxious looks.

"Nothing for us?" demanded Tom Merry desperately.

"Yes, Master Merry. There's one for you."

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry took the letter and opened it eagerly.

"Hurrah!" roared Blake, smiting Tom on the shoulder before that youth had time to withdraw the contents of his own letter. "Gussy's fiver's arrived! Corn in Egypt! We shall be able to go to Rainbridge, after all!"

"Yas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, beaming. "Tom Merry, deah boy, you and Mannahs and Lowthah will be my guests, of course!"

"Grooogh!" gasped Tom Merry, for Blake's effusive thump on the back had nearly winded him. "We shall be pleased, of course, Gussy, if we can't pay for ourselves. Hallo! By jingo! A postal-order for a quid!"

"Three cheers!" said Monty Lowther, beaming. "Who's it from, Tommy?"

The captain of the Shell was reading the letter which accompanied the postal-order.

"My hat!" he exclaimed suddenly. "It's from my uncle, whom I thought was in India. He—he's returned to England, and is now in London, attached to the India Office."

"Bai Jove! How wippin'! Is he comin' here, Tom Merry?"

"No," replied Tom, shaking his head. "He is too busily engaged upon diplomatic work. But—but I can't make it out, you fellows. Mr. Lathom goes away this afternoon for a few weeks' rest, doesn't he?"

"Yes. The doctor ordered him a change of air and a complete rest," said Blake wonderingly. "But what the thump has that got to do with your uncle's letter, Tommy?"

"Heaps!" replied Tom. "My uncle writes to say that Mr. Reginald Anderson, a friend of his, whose acquaintance he made in India, is coming to St. Jim's to take Mr. Lathom's place!"

"Wha-a-a-ai!"

Tom Merry looked round to see that nobody else could hear.

"Blessed if I can quite make this out," he said. "My uncle says that he had arranged with Dr. Holmes for Mr. Anderson to come to St. Jim's as a temporary master, in Mr. Lathom's place, for a very serious purpose. Enemies have followed Mr. Anderson from India, and have designs on his life. The authorities are doing their best to get hold of the men, who belong to a powerful secret society of the Punjab, and, meanwhile, for safety's sake, Mr. Anderson is coming to St. Jim's in the guise of a master. My uncle wants me to keep an eye on Mr. Anderson, and see that no harm befalls him while at St. Jim's. He trusts me, you see. Rather an unusual sort of job, isn't it, you fellows? I've got to be the guardian angel of a giddy master I haven't seen yet!"

"Bai Jove!"

"It's the giddy limit!" said Jack Blake. "When does Mr. Anderson arrive?"

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"This afternoon," replied Tom Merry. "Uncle says that as soon as I receive this I had better see the Head. I'll go up now."

"Great pip!"

Tom Merry thrust the letter into his pocket and went indoors, leaving his chums standing on the School House steps open-mouthed with astonishment.

The captain of the Shell went up to the Head's study and tapped at the door.

"Come in!" said the quiet, cultured voice of Dr. Holmes.

Tom Merry entered, and found Mr. Railton, the School Housemaster, with the Head.

"Ah! Come in, Merry!" said Dr. Holmes, peering up over the rims of his eyeglasses. "You have heard from your uncle, I presume?"

"Yes, sir," replied Tom. "He tells me that Mr. Latham's place is being taken by a Mr. Anderson—"

"Temporarily, my lad," interposed the Head. "Your uncle probably explained matters to you. It is a very delicate subject, my lad, and I rely upon your discretion not to make it public property at this school. Of course, I have no objection to your telling your friends, all of whom are trustworthy lads. Mr. Anderson has in a certain way incurred the wrath of a certain band of criminals of the Funjab, who have followed him to England, intent on taking his life. Your uncle, whom I greatly esteem as a friend, sought my advice and help, which I have freely given by allowing Mr. Anderson to come here as a temporary master for the Fourth Form. He is capable of performing the ordinary duties of a form-master, and I have received excellent reports of him. His position here was offered him purely as a safeguard against his foes. They are unlikely to trace him to this school; but in case they do, your uncle, Merry, was anxious that you should know, and thus be prepared to ward off any attempts on Mr. Anderson's life. This seems an amazing and improbable affair, but there is a grave meaning at the back of it all. You understand perfectly well, Merry?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Anderson will arrive this afternoon. Your uncle has already mentioned you to him, and he will look forward to meeting you at Rylcombe," continued Dr. Holmes. "Would it be a great inconvenience to you, my lad, to meet Mr. Anderson when he arrives?"

Tom Merry's face fell a trifle, but it was only momentarily. "Yes, that will be quite all right, sir," he replied. "I'm quite looking forward to meeting Mr. Anderson. I'll spend the afternoon in Rylcombe, and meet the trains as they come in."

Tom Merry left the Head and Mr. Railton to discuss arrangements for the new Fourth-Form master, and rejoined his chums in the quadrangle.

They greeted him with eager looks.

"Well," demanded Monty Lowther, "what has the Head got to say, Tommy?"

"It's settled that Mr. Anderson is coming," replied Tom Merry. "He will come this afternoon, the Head expects, and I'm going to meet him."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Then you won't be coming to Rainbridge?" demanded Blake.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I'm afraid not," he replied. "It's my duty to pay attention to my uncle's friend, you know. Sorry, old sons! I'm jolly keen to go, but under the circumstances it can't be done."

"Then I'll stay here with you, Tommy!" said Lowther.

"Same here!" declared Manners.

"That's decent of you fellows!" replied Tom Merry. "But why not go over to Rainbridge and enjoy yourselves?"

"We'll stick to you, Tommy," said Manners quietly. "The old firm always hangs together. Besides, we're rather interested in this new master whom you've got to keep under your wing—aren't we, Monty?"

"What ho!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"All serene, then," said Blake. "Sorry your fellows won't be able to come. But we'll tell you all about the match when we return. Well, we'd better get our things on and start out. We shall miss a good deal of the match as it is."

"Yas, wathah!"

The chums of Study No. 6 set out from St. Jim's five minutes later, leaving the Terrible Three to their own devices.

CHAPTER 2. Killing Time.

THE Terrible Three ambled across to Big Side and occupied half an hour watching the scratch cricket match between the First Eleven, under Kildare of the Sixth, and a team captained by Smith major of the Shell. Then they took a leisurely stroll down to Rylcombe.

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The High Street was, as usual, dull and sleepy. Tom Merry & Co. strolled along to the railway-station, saw a train arrive, and, having made sure that Mr. Anderson was not among the passengers who alighted, they retraced their footsteps into the station yard.

They were just in time to see a party of five Grammarians drive along the High Street on bicycles, and dismount outside the village bunshop. Gordon Gay, the hero of Rylcombe Grammar School, was there with his chums, Frank Monk, the Woottons, and Tadpole. The Grammarians did not see the Terrible Three. They leaned their machines against the kerb, and crowded into the bunshop. Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

"Good egg!" said Tom. "Now for a little joke on those Grammarians wasters! We haven't had any fun with 'em for quite a week, and I've got a wheeze. Let's loosen the back wheels of their 'giggers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's a ripping wheeze, Tommy!"

The St. Jim's juniors crept up to their rivals' bicycles with the stealth of Red Indians. Peering through the bunshop window, they could see Gordon Gay & Co. regaling themselves with ginger-pop and pastries, blissfully ignorant of their enemies lurking outside.

It was the work of a few minutes to withdraw spanners from the tool-bags of the machines and loosen the back wheels. Having done the deed to their satisfaction, the Terrible Three concealed themselves in a doorway opposite and waited.

Ten minutes later, Gordon Gay & Co. emerged from the tuckshop, looking cheerful and refreshed.

"Now for a spin over the heath, chaps!" said Gordon Gay, wheeling his bicycle into the road. "Hope we run across a few of those St. Jim's wasters. I feel just like a rag!"

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

The five Grammarians mounted their cycles, and pedalled along the High Street. The Terrible Three then came out of concealment in the doorway, and, looking after their rivals, chuckled.

"Things will begin to happen soon!" grinned Tom Merry. "Those nuts won't last a few minutes, and— Ha, ha, ha! Tadpole's off!"

Tadpole was having difficulty with his machine.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped suddenly, and almost cannoned into Jack Wootton. "My beastly chain's off, and— Yooooooogh!"

The chain became entangled with the wheel, which then came out of its groove. Next minute, Tadpole's machine went over, and its rider snote the hard, unsympathetic cobblestones with a loud thud.

"Yooooooogh!"

"Why, you silly chump!" exclaimed Gordon Gay, glaring round. "Couldn't you— Why, wh-what the— Oh, my hat! Yooooooogh!"

A similar thing occurred to Gay's own machine. His chain came off, and then the back wheel slipped back, precipitating him sideways. Gordon Gay landed on top of Carboy, and the two yelled simultaneously.

"Look out!" shrieked Frank Monk, as he found the chain off his machine. "What the merry dickens is the matter— Yerrugh!"

Monk simply whizzed off his machine, the back wheel of which suddenly came off. The two Woottons met with the same disaster. Soon, all five Grammarians lay sprawled in the roadway, their machines lying on the cobblestones, each with the back wheel out of place.

"Grooooooh-hoo!"

"Yah! Ow-ow-vow!"

"Wh-what the dickens—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three, looking on in high amusement from a safe distance. "This is where we smile! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! The cads!" exclaimed Gordon Gay, struggling to his feet and rubbing his bruises. "Do you see what they've done, chaps? The nuts on the back wheels of our machines have been unfastened, and—and we've all come a cropper!"

"Yow! The awful rotters!"

The Grammarians picked themselves up one by one, and their machines also.

They could now see exactly what the Terrible Three had done.

As for those latter youths they made themselves scarce as soon as they saw Gordon Gay & Co. arise. They had no wish to meet the Grammarians at close quarters. Gordon Gay and his companions were in a homicidal frame of mind at that moment, and if they could have laid hands on the Terrible Three, they would have committed instant battle, murder, and sudden death.

So Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, chortling with victory, retreated into the railway-station, leaving Gordon Gay & Co. surrounded by a laughing crowd of village urchins and grinning yokels.

"Yow! The unspeakable beasts!" groaned Gordon Gay. "We—we can easily fix the wheels again, of course, but— Oh, clear off, you noisy little brats!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" chorled the village urchins, highly amused.

Gordon Gay & Co. set about fixing the back wheels to their machines, and then they were only too glad to pedal away as swiftly as possible, for the remarks the village youths were making were exasperating and humiliating in the extreme.

Tom Merry & Co. went into the station just as a train from Wayland arrived.

They scanned the faces of each passenger who descended, but Mr. Reginald Anderson did not put in his appearance.

"Next train four-thirty!" said Tom Merry. "We might as well go over to the tuckshop for a feed, you chaps!"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther, with much heartiness.

So the Terrible Three went into the tuckshop, where Tom Merry changed the postal-order his uncle had sent him.

They were soon regaling themselves with all manner of luscious eatables.

The time passed quickly after that. The Terrible Three chatted cricket, and the possibilities of the St. Jim's Junior Eleven scoring a victory over Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rockwood last week.

"Half-past four!" said Tom Merry, as the village clock chimed. "Time we went across to the station again, to see whether His Nibs has arrived!"

"Yes, rather!"

Quite a number of people descended from the train when it did arrive—ten minutes late, as was usual with trains at Rylcombe Station.

But the new master was not to be seen.

Tom Merry & Co. walked out of the station, looking gloomy and disappointed.

"It's nearly five o'clock!" grunted Monty Lowther. "I wonder if the beggar is coming. It's no joke, mouching about here, when we might be writing our articles for the 'St. Jim's News' in the study."

Tom Merry nodded.

"This is a dashed nuisance, I agree," he said. "And then heaved a sigh of philosophic resignation. "But, anyway, we'll stick it a little longer. Let's buy the 'Boys' Herald' and read about Stringer to while away the passing hour!"

"Good wheeze!"

CHAPTER 3.

No Joke for Blake & Co.

JACK BLAKE & CO., meanwhile, had witnessed the great match at Rainbridge.

The county team had beaten their opponents by the magnificent margin of 63 runs. But it had been a Spartan struggle, and the spectators had been interested and thrilled all the afternoon.

"Jolly good game!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as they walked with the throng down the King's Road towards the station. "I'm afraid theah's no time for tea, deah boys, before we wurn to the school. Bai Jove! We shall miss the twain unless we huvwry!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Blake, looking at his watch. "I had quite forgotten the time! We dare not miss call-over, you chumps—lines and lickings have been too jolly plentiful this week. We shall have to scoot!"

The Fourth Form juniors sprinted along the King's Road, dodging the pedestrians, who, like themselves, had just come away from the cricket ground.

"Train's in!" yelled Digby, as they pounded into the station.

"We'll manage it if we hurry!" gasped Blake.

They simply tore through the barrier and on to the platform just as the guard blew his whistle.

"She's moving!" roared Blake.

"Quick, chaps—here's a carriage!"

Blake jumped on the footboard as the train moved along the platform, and wrenched open the carriage door that was nearest. He tumbled in, and was followed by Herries, D'Arcy, and Digby in quick succession.

Slam!

The door shut tight behind the chums of Study No. 6.

"Gwooooh!" gasped Arthur Augustus

D'Arcy, sinking into a seat, and mopping his heated brow with a spotless cambric handkerchief. "That was wathah a close thing, deah boys!"

"Thank goodness we were in time!" panted Blake. "By Jove, this is a corridor train! I expect it's the express from London. We change at Wayland for the village."

The Fourth-Formers grinned at each other, and arranged their neckties, which had become disarranged in the scuffle for the train.

"I wonder if the new master has arrived yet?" said Blake thoughtfully. "I'm rather keen to see what Anderson is like. Fancy old Tommy having the job of looking after him, too!"

"A bit off, isn't it?" grinned Digby. "What the merry dickens has Anderson done, I wonder, to get into trouble with those fellows? Things must be pretty serious, or else he wouldn't have to be smuggled into St. Jim's as a master."

"Cave!" said Blake suddenly. "Here comes somebody!"

Next minute the door opened, and a man strolled in.

Jack Blake & Co. looked at him in surprise.

"Hallo, you kids!" the stranger greeted them. "Didn't you know this carriage had been already occupied? Sorry to have to disturb you, but my baggage is up on the rack!"

The St. Jim's juniors looked up, and saw a leather bag on the luggage-rack above them.

"Oh, we're awfully sorry, sir!" said Blake. "We—we didn't know, of course. As a matter of fact, we nearly missed this train, and simply jumped into the first carriage, we could, which happened to be this one. You see, we have to get back at St. Jim's by half an hour, otherwise we shall miss call-over, and that means lines or a licking."

"All serene!" said the stranger, with a grin. "I'm feeling rather lonely, and rather welcome your company, if you have no objection to sharing the cage with me."

"No objections at all," said Blake. "Really, we must thank you, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus graciously.

The stranger flopped into a corner seat, and lit a cigarette. Then he looked at Jack Blake & Co., and gave such a cheery grin that they, too, had to laugh.

He was quite a youthful man, with a face that was extremely boyish, in spite of his tan and freckles. His eyes seemed to be ever twinkling with the light of mischief and fun. He had rather a snub nose, and a large mouth that seemed to be always working into a grin. Jack Blake & Co. took kindly to this stranger, and voted him a "sport."



"Excuse me!" said the stranger suddenly. "Do you usually carry your pets about with you?" He put his hand into D'Arcy's jacket, and withdrew a little, wriggling white mouse. Arthur Augustus felt back with a gasp. "Gwast Scott!" he ejaculated. "W—was that in my pocket? Oh cwumbe!" (See page 6.)

"You kids belong to St. Jim's?" inquired the stranger pleasantly. "Let me see, that's near Wayland, isn't it?"

"Well, rather more near Rylcombe," replied Jack Blake. "Rylcombe is the next station to Wayland Junction. We catch the local at the junction."

"What's it like at St. Jim's?" asked the other. "It seems years and years since I was at a public school. Winchester was my place."

"Oh, we don't have such a bad time, on the whole!" grinned Blake. "Lessons are rather a grind, but we manage to get plenty of fun out of life."

The stranger nodded.

"If it wasn't for lessons, life would be all beer and skittles—eh?" he said, with a chuckle. "I can quite sympathize with you kids; those were my sentiments when I was at school and college. Dashed if I remember much of what I learned there."

Jack Blake & Co. grinned.

"Anyway, let's have another diversion to while away the time," continued the stranger. "That's a nice watch you've got there, young fellow!"

He addressed Blake, and, as he spoke those words, the stranger leant forward, and withdrew a magnificent gold watch from Blake's pocket.

Jack Blake & Co. blinked at the watch in astonishment.

Then Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave vent to a sudden exclamation of amazement.

"Bai Jove, that's my watch! Blake, you awful boundah, how—"

"Wh-wh-what the merry dickens!" gurgled Blake bewilderedly. "How—how did your ticker get into my pocket, Gussy?"

"Gwest Scott!"

Herries and Digby looked at Blake in speechless wonderment.

"You don't mean to say that isn't your watch!" said the juniors' companion to Blake. "Well, I never! I reckon you'll have to account for that, young feller-me-lad!"

Blake went quite red.

"I—I didn't—I don't know—I can't understand it!" he stammered. "Gussy, old chap, you don't think I'd pinch your ticker, do you?"

"No, wathah not! Don't be a fwabjous ass, Blake!" said D'Arcy warmly. "I distinctly remember havin' my watch in my pocket when we were comin' along the King's Wood, howevah. Pewwaps—"

"Excuse me," said the stranger suddenly. "Do you usually carry your pets about with you, Master—er—D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus looked at him without comprehending.

"Pets!" he exclaimed. "I—I don't undahstand!"

"Look here!"

The stranger put his hand in D'Arcy's jacket, and withdrew a little, wriggling white mouse. Arthur Augustus fell back with a gasp.

"Gwest Scott!" he ejaculated. "W-was that in my pocket? Oh ewumbs!"

"There's another!" yelled Blake excitedly. "Why, Gussy, you're alive with 'em!"

"Gwooooh! Wheeah are they comin' fwom? Oh, the howwid little beasts!"

"Keep still!" exclaimed the stranger. "There's one crawling down the back of your neck!"

"Ugh! Take it away! Oh, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake, Herries, and Digby.

"Seven white mice!" said their companion, putting the wriggling little animals into his hat. "Really, Master D'Arcy, that's an unusual way to carry your pets about! Do you want them back?"

"Gwooooh! They're not mine!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Howevah did the little cwestures get into my pockets? I don't keep white mice, bai Jove!"

"Perhaps young Wally planted them on you," remarked Blake. "There's no accounting for what your young minor might do, Gussy!"

"Gwest Scott! Wally wouldn't have the feahful nerve to put his white mice in my pockets!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I am in quite a flutah, bai Jove!"

"What's that hanging out from underneath your cap?" inquired the stranger, addressing Robert Arthur Digby.

"Hallo! It's a piece of ribbon!"

Digby gave a jump as he found the stranger pulling a long length of yellow ribbon from his cap.

"Gug-great pip!" he ejaculated.

"There seem to be yards and yards of it!" chuckled the other, pulling out huge lengths of ribbon from Digby's cap.

Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy almost fell down in amazement.

"Mum-my only sainted Aunt Maria!" gurgled Blake.

"Where's it all coming from? Look! There are yards and yards of it!"

"Let's take your cap off," said their companion in the

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carriage; and he grabbed Digby's cap. But still the ribbon continued to come forth from that article of headgear. The yellow ribbon changed to yards of blue, and then the colour became red.

Soon the floor of the carriage was completely covered with ribbons of many hues. There must have been scores of yards of it!

"Gug-great guns!" stuttered Digby in a faint voice. "Did all that come out of my cap? Well, I'm blest!"

"It's uncanny, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, whose monocle had dropped from his eye in amazement.

"Here's the end of it at last!" chuckled the stranger, handing Digby back his cap. "My, what a lot of ribbon! I'll pick it under the seat, so that you kids won't get your legs entangled with it."

Jack Blake & Co. were speechless with wonderment. Digby looked at his cap as though it were a thing bewitched, but there seemed to be nothing wrong with it. He replaced it on his head rather gingerly.

"Well, after all this excitement I think we might settle down a bit," said the stranger. "Three more stations to Wayland. I say, you kids, I suppose you haven't any money to lend a poor chap who's frightfully hard up and on his beam ends?"

The St. Jim's juniors regarded their companion in astonishment.

"I'm sure you kids are simply rolling in wealth!" said the stranger. "Why, look at the banknotes sticking out of that young fellow's pocket!"

George Herries was the young fellow referred to.

"Banknotes!" he ejaculated. "What are you gassing about? I'm stony!"

"Then you must have been robbing a bank!" replied the other. "Look here!"

He thrust his hand into Herries' pocket, and when it came out he had a handful of rustling banknotes.

Herries gave a yell of amazement. Blake, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared at the money like boys in a dream. There were about half a dozen banknotes—wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.

"Mum-my only hat!" stuttered Herries. "Who put all that money into my pocket?"

There was no reply. Blake, Digby, and D'Arcy were giving him very peculiar looks. Herries went red.

"What are you blinking at me like that for?" he demanded. "D'you think I've pinched this lot?"

"No, you chump!" replied Blake. "But it's a pretty potty sort of joke, I must say. You'd better put those notes back where you borrowed them from, Herries, or you may find yourself in hot water!"

"What the dickens do you mean?" howled Herries. "I haven't borrowed these notes! I haven't seen 'em before!"

"Bai Jove!"

Herries' jaw dropped when their companion withdrew a handful of banknotes from his other pocket.

"More notes!" howled Blake. "What the merry blazes have—"

"I—I—I—I—" stuttered Herries.

Blake gave a sudden whoop and pounced upon the notes.

"Look here! They're false!" he shouted excitedly.

"Wha-a-at!"

"These notes are all spoof!" yelled Blake. "They're not banknotes at all! Herries has been spoofing us!"

Herries drew a deep, deep breath of relief.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he said. "I knew I hadn't—"

"You—you funny idiot!" roared Blake, glaring at him. "I suppose you call that a joke! Bump him!"

"Yarooooh! Here, wharrer you at? Leggo! Yah! Ow-wow-wow!" howled Herries; and Blake, Digby, and D'Arcy grasped him and jerked him to the floor of the carriage.

"We'll knock the silly fatheadedness out of him!" said Blake grimly. "Bump him!"

Bump, bump, bump!

The windows in the carriage fairly rattled.

"Here, cheese it, you kids!" exclaimed their new companion, stepping forward. "Don't hurt the poor chap. It wasn't his joke at all; it was mine!"

"Eh?"

"Don't you tumble? I was working conjuring tricks on you all the time!" chuckled the other. "That watch I sneaked from Master D'Arcy and planted on you; and then there were the white mice and the ribbons, and—"

"Gug-great Scott!"

"Bai Jove!"

Blake, Digby, and D'Arcy allowed Herries to fall with a bump. Herries struggled to his feet. He shook his fist under the snub-nose of the conjurer.

"I suppose you think you're beastly clever!" he hooted. "Why, for two pins I'd mop up the carriage with you!"

"Pax, old chap!" said Blake pacifically. "There's no harm done, really. Can't you take a joke?"

"Yes, I like that!" retorted Herries hotly. "Couldn't you take a joke when you thought I was spoofing?"

"Ahem! That—that's different," said Blake. "You ought to be jolly interested in this gentleman's conjuring tricks. However do you manage them, sir?"

"Oh, it's just a natural gift!" smiled the other, when Herries had subsided. "I rather fancied conjuring as a hobby when at school, so I studied the art, and am now more or less an expert. Sorry to have frightened you fellows. Would you care for me to give you a few more demonstrations, just to while away the time?"

"Yes, rather!" said Blake and Digby enthusiastically.

"Conjuring is vewy interestin', bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "Good!" said the amateur conjurer. "Suppose I work the wonderful boot disappearing trick? If you kids will take your boots off, I'll shove 'em outside and make 'em disappear. Then, as if by magic, you'll probably find them under the seat, or on the rack, or somewhere."

Jack Blake & Co. looked at each other rather dubiously. "Don't funk it!" chuckled the conjurer. "I'll give you my word of honour that your boots shall be returned!"

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "Let's do it, chaps!"

The chums of Study No. 6 took off their boots and handed them to their companion.

"Thanks!" he said, gathering them up. "Now to work the giddy oracle. I'll just place them outside in the corridor, like so, with all the laces tied together, and—"

Roar!

The train plunged into the tunnel half a mile from Abbotsford Station.

Deep, impenetrable gloom enveloped the juniors in the carriage. They jumped to their feet and groped their way to the door leading to the corridor.

"Where are you, sir?" shouted Blake, for the noise of the train dashing through the tunnel was deafening. "Yow! I wish I had my boots on—I've just kicked the doorway!"

Where are you? Daylight, bai Jove!" chirruped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in great relief.

The train emerged from the tunnel at last, and the St. Jim's juniors were able to see again. But, although they looked everywhere, they could not see the conjurer. He had completely disappeared—so had their boots!

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Blake. "Where is the silly ass? He must be on the train somewhere! Come on, chaps!"

Walking gingerly in their socks, the four juniors walked along the corridor, peering into every compartment.

But, although they walked the whole length of the train, they could see no sign of the conjurer.

They returned to their own compartment at last, gloomy and despondent.

"What shall we do, chaps?" moaned Blake. "The awful rotter has conjured himself away, as we'll as our boots. Look! His suit-case is gone, too! Oh dear! Here we are at Wayland!"

The four hapless juniors looked at each other haggardly.

"We—we can't walk out in our socks!" howled Digby furiously.

"No, wathah not, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, almost tearfully.

"Bai Jove! What a howlid pwedication to be in! I—I am all in a fluttah, deah boys!"

"Oh, wouldn't I like to catch that merry joker!" said Herries viciously, sparring in the air at an imaginary vision of the genial soul who had decamped with their boots. "I'd make him see a few stars!"

A sandy-haired porter came up to the door of the carriage and glared in.

"Har you coming hout, or har you stoppin' him?" he demanded. "This train's just going hoff!"

Phooep! went the guard's whistle. "Oh dear!" groaned Blake. "We've got to face the music, chaps. Come on!"

And just as the train moved forward the four hapless schoolboys jumped out upon the platform in their socks.

No sooner had he landed than Blake gave a howl.

"Yaroooooop! I've trodden on a tin-tack or something! Grooooooh!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the porter, immensely amused at the strange spec-

tacle of four schoolboys minus their boots. "Wot a barney! Haw, haw, haw!"

Blake looked haggardly across to the local platform, and saw the little train for Rylcombe steaming in.

"Our train's in!" he gasped. "Chaps, we dare not miss that train! Belt for it!"

To the intense amusement of all beholders, the four schoolboys bolted along the platform.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the country rustics.

Blake & Co. heeded not the laughter, nor the funny remarks that were hurled at them. They thudded along the local platform and jumped into the local train, only just in time.

"Whew!" gasped Blake, sinking down into a seat. "This is all right, and no-mistake! Here we are without our boots; we've got to walk to St. Jim's when we reach Rylcombe, and there's no chance of getting any new boots, because the shops are shut! Oh, it's terrible!"

"Oh deah! How evah can we walk back without our boots, deah boys?"

Three hollow groans answered the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and blinked out of the window. The chums of Study No. 6 were too utterly discouraged to discuss their horrible predicament.

And the train rattled on its way to Rylcombe, bearing with it four distinctly unhappy and deluded youths.

CHAPTER 4.

The New Master Arrives.

"I'M fed up!"

Thus Montague Lowther of the Shell. His doleful, weary countenance did not disprove that announcement. Tom Merry and Manners, his companions, were also looking gloomy, glum, and tired. It was six o'clock, and they had waited all the afternoon for the new master, who had not yet turned up.

The Terrible Three were feeling rather exasperated. "I wonder if the bouncer is coming?" said Manners, as they strolled out of the station-yard into the High Street.

"If he's not in the next train we shall have to go, because—"

Honk, honk, honk!

It was the fierce blasting of a motor-car horn. Looking round, the Terrible Three saw a motor-car of the well-known



Bang! Taggles had driven the car head-on into a stone buttress of the wall, and buckled the bonnet of the vehicle, also the front wheels and axle, in a drastic manner. Taggles was hurried headlong out of the car to land on the ground, roaring as though he had been murdered. (See page 8.)

and much slandered Ford type draw up to the pavement just behind them.

Then they heard a gruff voice addressing them.

"I say, you boys!"

The Terrible Three turned, and found themselves gazing into a face that was almost completely covered with whiskers. Only the eyes were visible, blinking at them from behind a pair of huge, horn-rimmed spectacles.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther could not repress gasps of astonishment. Then they grinned. The gentlemen with the bushy whiskers and the horn-rimmed spectacles bore a most remarkable resemblance to an owl.

"Did you speak, sir?" asked Tom Merry respectfully.

"Yes, my boy. You belong to St. James' Collegiate School, I presume?"

The Terrible Three assured the stranger that they did.

"Excellent!" said this bewhiskered worthy in a gruff voice. "Do you know who I am?"

The Terrible Three drew deep breaths as the same thought struck them all at once.

"You—you're the new master?" said Tom Merry, in a faint voice.

"I am! My name is Mr. Reginald Anderson, B.A., the new temporary master of the Fourth Form. And I do believe I recognise my friend's nephew. Are you Tom Merry?"

"Yes, sir," replied the captain of the Shell, with a very peculiar look at the new master.

"Glad to meet you, my boy! I've heard all about you! Shake hands!"

He bounced out of the car, and plied Tom Merry's hand as though it were a pump-handle. Then Tom Merry, gasping after that hearty handshake, introduced Manners and Monty Lowther. Lowther, with a twinkle in his eyes, returned Mr. Anderson's grip with interest, and the two stood on the pavement wrenching at each other's hand for quite three minutes before Mr. Anderson chuckled and said:

"The Terrible Three grinned at Mr. Anderson. They took an instant liking to him, in spite of his whiskers and his horn-rimmed spectacles. He seemed imbued with joviality and boyish spirits, and those eyes of his, twinkling behind the huge lenses of his eyeglasses, had mischief in their very depths.

"Jump into the old bus!" said Mr. Anderson. "This is rather an unusual manner for a master to arrive at his new school, I suppose, but I'm used to doing things out of the ordinary. Originality and enterprise are great things, my boys—great things, and you should cultivate both of them. I'll just crank up, and then we'll hit the trail for St. Jim's."

The Terrible Three clambered into the Ford car. Tom Merry seating himself in front, Lowther and Manners in the tonneau, where Mr. Anderson had placed two leather bags, which seemingly comprised his luggage.

Mr. Anderson started the motor at last, jumped in, and next minute the car was moving along the cobbled High Street at quite a good pace.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"I reckon the chaps will stare when we buzz in at the gates!" he said to Mr. Anderson. "First time I've driven up in a giddy Ford car."

"The Head knows I'm coming, I suppose?" said Mr. Anderson, with a whiskery grin. "And you kids know all about me, don't you—how I'm having to hide from those fellows who are after my blood? Gee! But I never thought I'd ever become a schoolmaster. But I'm not complaining—as a matter of fact, I might manage to have a good time at St. Jim's, if all the boys are as lively as you three. You know, I've been a reckless old scamp in my time. People tell me I haven't grown up yet, in spite of my er—whiskers."

St. Jim's was reached in record time. Taggles, the old and ancient school-porter, gasped when the Ford car, 'midst a cloud of dust and blue smoke, whizzed in at the gates of St. Jim's.

Honk, honk, honk!

"My hey!" said Taggles, blinking at the bewhiskered gentleman who descended from the car with the Terrible Three. "Wot the dickens—"

"Do you understand the mysteries of the Ford car, my man?" demanded Mr. Anderson of the amazed porter.

"My hey! Which Hi don't see as 'ow—"

"None of your cheek, sir! I'm Mr. Anderson, the new master! I want my car parked somewhere—and I don't want it shoved in a rabbit-hutch, either. It may be a Ford, but I've taught it how to keep its nuts. Now, then, take that boiled sheep's-head look off your face, and let's see the wheels start turning!"

Taggles was amazed. So were Kildare, and Darrell, and Monteith, and a number of other seniors who gathered round. Mr. Reginald Anderson was regarded with as much curiosity as though he were a specimen of some rare animal from the Zoo!

"Look 'ere, sir!" exclaimed Taggles. "Wot I says is this
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'ere—I've never 'ad dealin's with motor-cars—Ford or hotherwise, and—"

"Then I'll teach you!" said Mr. Anderson briskly. "Get inside, my man. Come on, n—w—get inside!"

Taggles, more bewildered than willing, climbed into the driver's seat of the car. Mr. Anderson set the engine going, and told Taggles to take off the brake.

Taggles did so, and put his foot on the starting lever. There was a bang and a cloud of smoke. Next minute the Ford car was careering across the Close, with Taggles at the steering-wheel, hanging on like grim death.

Kildare & Co., and the horde of fags under Wally D'Arcy of the Third, who had gathered, scattered like leaves before the wind.

"Steer, man—steer!" yelled Mr. Anderson, springing after the car. "You'll be into those trees in a minute! Get back to low gear! That's right! You're safe enough!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the spectators, immensely tickled at the strange sight of Taggles, the school-porter, driving a Ford car round the quadrangle.

The speed of the car was not excessive, but to Taggles, who no more knew how to manage the car than a steam locomotive, the pace was like unto greased lightning.

He wrenched this way and that at the steering-wheel, and pursued a very zig-zag career across the School House steps.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Tom Merry, heading a crowd of juniors who dashed in pursuit. "Go it, Taggles! Put the speed on! Mind you don't go into the fountain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Anderson, with an agility surprising in one of his years, chased the car on its chequered career, shouting instructions to the hapless Taggles.

Mr. Horace Ratcliff, the master of the New House, happened to be crossing the quadrangle. He walked right in the way of the car.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated, stopping and blinking in horrified amazement at the car. "Taggles! Taggles, is it possible! In a car! Taggles! How dare you drive that automobile in such a dangerous and reckless manner—in the precincts of this school! I— Yarooogh! Oh dear! Yah! Oooogh!"

Mr. Ratcliff yelled as the car whizzed up and, missing his person by a mere foot, caught up his scholastic gown and ripped it from his back. Mr. Ratcliff was bowled completely over, and he smote the hard, unsympathetic ground with a dull thud and a yell.

"Yooogh! What has happened?" gurgled Mr. Ratcliff, as Monteith, choking with laughter, assisted him to his feet.

"Am I injured, Monteith? Groooogh!"

"Ha, ha! You—you're all right, sir!" stammered Monteith, repressing his laughter with difficulty. "Only your gown was caught by the mudguard. By Jove! The car's hit the buttress!"

Bang!

That ominous sound came from not far away. It was just beside the School House steps. Taggles had driven the car head-on into a stone buttress of the wall, and buckled the bonnet of the vehicle, also the front wheels and axle, in a drastic manner. Taggles was hurled headlong out of the car. He landed on the ground, roaring as though he had been murdered. In reality, he only received a slight bump.

Mr. Anderson skipped up and stopped the motor. Then he dragged Taggles to his feet.

"You—you blankety ass!" he exclaimed. "Couldn't you steer better than that? Now look at my car—it's ruined!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the onlookers.

"Good heavens! What does this unseemly disturbance mean?"

It was the voice of Dr. Holmes. Next minute, the Head strode down the School House steps, the boys making way for him. He stood stock still in amazement, when he saw the strange scene before him.

"Bless my soul! A—a motor-car! There has been an accident! How came it here? And—and who are you, sir?"

"I am Mr. Reginald Anderson, the new master of the Fourth!" said the bewhiskered gentleman, bowing and smiling broadly. "Pray accept my deepest regret, Dr. Holmes, that this distressing affair has occurred. I arrived, you see, in this car, and was instructing the school-porter how to drive it, when—the car ran into this stone buttress. I rejoice to say that the school hasn't been damaged. My car, of course, has suffered. But I can get a new one. I'm afraid it would be impossible for me to purchase you a new St. Jim's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, boys!" rapped the Head sternly. "Really, Mr. Anderson, this is a most—er—unusual advent for a new master. Taggles should not have been entrusted with the care of your car. However, the damage has been done, and the car must be removed as quickly as possible. Taggles, I leave you to do that. Mr. Anderson, I shall be pleased to have an interview with you in my study immediately!"

"With pleasure, sir!" gushed the new master. Gathering up his two bags, he followed Dr. Holmes indoors, leaving the boys in the quadrangle gasping.

"Well, carry me home to die, somebody!" said Monty Lowther. "Did you ever see such a merchant? And—and he's come to be a master at the school. My word, you chaps, I reckon we're going to see some high old times!"

Kildare, and several other stalwart prefects of the Sixth, came forward, and assisted Taggles in the task of hauling the damaged car to the school stables, where it was housed and left for Mr. Anderson to decide its ultimate fate.

Then the bell for call-over rang, and the boys went up to Big Hall, chuckling over the queer manner of Mr. Reginald Anderson's arrival at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 5.

Mr. Anderson Explains.

MONTY LOWTHER, Tom Merry, Manners, and Kit Wildrake were crossing the quadrangle half an hour later. They had been over to pay Figgins & Co. of the New House a visit. Dusk was beginning to creep over St. Jim's. The old elms and the cloisters were shrouded in evening shadows.

Four figures had appeared in the school gateway, and it was the sight of those four figures that caused Monty Lowther to stop and stare at something.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Wildrake looked. Then they gasped.

"Great Christopher Columbus!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Blake & Co.! They've returned at last!"

The chums of the Sixth went over to the gates just as Taggles was opening them, grumbling the while.

"Which the new master, Mr. Anderson, told me to tell you four to report yourself here, once!" said Taggles surlily. "Wot I says is this 'ere, you young rips ought to be drowned—all boys ought to be drowned. I—"

"Oh, chase it, Taggles!" snapped Blake bad-temperedly. "Let's get by, can't you?"

Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the gates. And, to the utter astonishment of Tom Merry & Co., the Fourth-Formers seemed to be walking with difficulty.

Clump, clump, clump!
"Great pip!" gasped Tom Merry. "What the dickens is—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther, with a sudden burst of mirth. "Look what they've got on their feet! Some boots!"

The boots that graced the feet of Jack Blake & Co. were certainly sufficient to make anybody stare and wonder.

They were huge, heavy, hob-nailed boots, of the type worn by navvies and farm labourers. Those boots did not even fit the schoolboys who wore them. The elegant Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked a perfect picture, with a pair of huge farm boots upon his feet. Jack Blake's pair of boots seemed to be several sizes too large for him. Herries and Digby were similarly discomfited. They all clumped horribly as they walked.

"Ye gods!" ejaculated Kit Wildrake. "What on earth are you chaps wearing? Look at their clodhoppers! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"
"Jack Blake glared.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" he growled. "How the merry dickens would you like to be in our position? We've had to walk all the way from Rylcombe like this!"

"Excuse our laughter, but—really it's too rich!" gasped Tom Merry. "How did it happen, old son?"

Blake explained how they had met the cheery young stranger in the railway carriage, how he had deluded them with his clever conjuring tricks, and how he had disappeared with their boots in the tunnel just before reaching Abbotsford.

The Terrible Three and Kit Wildrake grinned. They could see the funny side of the affair.

"Yes, it's all very well for you burbling asses to laugh!" growled Blake. "We've had simply an awful time! When we got out at Rylcombe, we had to walk out into the High Street, and had all the village kids laughing at us! Then Gordon Gay & Co. came along on their bikes, and made us run up the High Street in socks. Yow-ow! I reckon my feet are covered all over with blisters. We managed to bunk into a large cottage at last, and the man there took pity on us and provided us with these old boots—they were all he'd got. So we—had to put these horrid things on, and make the best of it. Here we are—we've missed call-over, and Taggles says the new master is going to call us over the coals!"

"Weally, deah boys, Mr. Anderson ought to see reason, if we point out to him the aggravated circumstances—"

"Good expression that, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther enthusiastically. "It's worth a guinea a box!"

"I weward your wemarks with uttath contempt, Lowthah!"

returned the noble swell of St. Jim's, with a frigid look. "As I was sayin', deah boys, the new master would probably let us off, when we explain the aggravated circumstances of the case. As a fellow of tact and judgment, I wipose to explain to Mr. Anderson—"

"Keep off the grass, Gussy!" snapped Blake. "These rotten boots will do a lot of explaining bizzny for us, I reckon. Let's go up to the new master just as we are, and tell him just what happened. What's Anderson like, you fellows?"

"Oh, a regular coughtdrop!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle.

"He looks like an anarchist, but he's as lively as a young chicken!" said Kit Wildrake.

"Anderson's a gay old dog!" said Monty Lowther. "You are bound to take him to your hearts at once!"

"Wish he was our Form-master!" said Manners.

Jack Blake & Co. brightened considerably. They clumped across the quadrangle, much to the amusement of Tom Merry & Co. and others who happened to be attracted by the heavy sounds of their walking.

"My only sainted Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally D'Arcy, who came down the stairs with Curly Gibson and Jamerson, as Jack Blake & Co. clumped indoors. "What in thunder—Ha, ha, ha! Is that the latest style in boots? You do look nobby, Gus, I must say!"

"Weally, Wally—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" said Blake hurriedly. "We don't want to attract the whole giddy school, Gussy, you chump!"

The hapless chums of Study No. 6 proceeded on their way to their Form-master's study. They tapped at the door, and a deep voice bade them enter. They walked into the study, and as they entered they saw the whistery Form-master seated at the desk regarding them intently through his horn-rimmed eyeglasses.

"Come right in!" said Mr. Anderson cheerfully. "Are you the four rascals, Blake, Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, who did not answer at call-over?"

"Yes, sir," replied Blake. "We—we've been detained and—"

"Goodness gracious! Whatever are you boys wearing on your feet?"

The chums of the Fourth looked dismally at the huge boots they were wearing.

"We—we've been spoofed, sir!" exclaimed Blake. "We went over to see the match at Rainbridge, and—"

"Pway let me explain, Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "As a fellow of tact and judgment, I shall probably impwess Mr. Anderson with the aggravation of the circumstances, and—"

"Anderson, I think, will explain matters, D'Arcy," said Mr. Anderson calmly.

Gussy subsided, and Blake explained. He "piled on the agony" when it came to describing their adventure in the train.

"That awful spoofed took us in properly!" said Blake viciously. "My hat, if we had found him afterwards—"

"What drastic vengeance would you have taken, my lad?" inquired Mr. Anderson sweetly.

"I—I'd punch his nose! I'd mop up the floor with him! I'd slaughter the boulder!" said Blake. "Oh, wouldn't I like to meet him again! I'd pay him out for japing us!"

"Really?" said Mr. Anderson, standing up. "Please don't carry your threats into execution, my dear Blake. I should hate to have my nose punched, and I'm sure I'd very much resent being used as a mop for the floor, alive or as a corpse."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded Blake.

Instead of making verbal reply, the new Form-master took off his glasses, and then, with a quick movement, whipped off all his whiskers. The cheery young fellow, whose acquaintance Blake & Co. had made in the train, stood revealed.

"Mum-my only hat!" said Blake faintly.

"Wh-what the dickens—" gurgled Herries.

"Who the—what the—" stuttered Digby.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, groping for his monocle, which had fallen limply from his eye. "I—I am in quite a fluttah! Gwast Scott! Bai Jove!"

Mr. Reginald Anderson chuckled. He took up one of the leather bags he had brought to St. Jim's with him, opened it, and withdrew four pairs of boots. These he laid upon the desk. Jack Blake & Co. looked first at their boots, and then at the new Form-master, with eyes that almost bulged from their heads in amazement.

"I'm so sorry to have given you lads such a fright," said Mr. Anderson with a chuckle. "Perhaps, before I call for water to revive you, I had better do some explaining myself. Just as you jumped into the train at Rainbridge I happened to be hiding behind the door of the next compartment. One of my enemies was on the train, and was looking for me. I heard what you said about Tom Merry having a look after

Mr. Anderson, who was being smuggled into St. Jim's as a master, and realised that you knew all about me. So, of course, I had no compunction in playing my jokes on you. As a matter of fact, you looked so jappable that I simply couldn't resist the temptation. Well, as you know, you had your boots off when the train entered the tunnel. I was outside in the corridor, when I heard Ramah Singh approaching. He chased me down to one of the end compartments, and in there we two had a terrific fight.

"I managed to overcome him, by means of pressing a certain spot at the back of his neck, which rendered him unconscious. That trick is a secret of the East. Not many Western people know of it, although many have been victims of it in China and India. I learned that trick, and many others, during my dealings with these Eastern rascals, more of which I'll tell you later. Well, having knocked out Ramah Singh, I gagged and bound him, and shoved him as far as possible under the seat. He is a little man, and I got most of him out of sight. In my bag I had various articles of make-up, which I brought along with me, thinking they would come in useful. I was very grateful I had thought of them, as you may well suppose.

"I placed these whiskers on my face, and wore a different hat. You must have seen me when you came along in socks a few minutes afterwards, looking for the fellow who had taken your boots. I left the train at Abbotsford, and hired a car at a local garage. You see, I was not taking risks. It dismayed me to discover that Ramah Singh was on my track, for I was so confident I should be able to get to St. Jim's, and stay there, unnoticed. There is my explanation, my lads, and now you understand why I decamped with your boots. Here they are, and—er—of course, I shall not punish you for being late.

Jack Blake had listened, open-mouthed, in wonderment. Mr. Anderson chuckled, and replaced his false whiskers and eyeglasses.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" was Blake's first astounded comment. "It—it sounds like a cheap adventure story! What happened to this chap Ramah Singh, sir?"

"Goodness knows!" chuckled Mr. Anderson. "Probably he will be discovered when the train reaches Southampton—unless anybody else goes into the carriage and finds him under the seat. Let me tell you all my story, my lads. As you know, I have been in India for the last three years, stationed at an out-of-the-way, fly-infested hole among the hills of the Punjab. There, on a rainy night, I gathered into a religious ceremony of the priests of Ra. The priests were a secret sect, formed many years ago, at the time of the Indian Mutiny, and had thousands of followers. Their creed is a weird and wonderful orgy of mysticism, and their practices too horrible for me to explain to you.

"The British authorities managed to stamp out the sect, but the high priests fled to the mountains, and continued their strange worship. Well, I blundered into their moonlight ceremony, and, having a good smattering of the language, I got to know quite a lot of what they were talking about. They were, for one thing, invoking the god Ra to give access to a rising of the natives which the priests had planned for the new moon. They intended massacring the whole of the white population of the Punjab. I was a silly ass, and managed to get discovered.

"The priests seized me, and kept me in their secret temple in the hills for upwards of three weeks. Goodness knows what they intended doing with me; I should probably have been murdered, but for a ruse of mine, which worked wonderfully well. I shammed insanity, tore my clothes to pieces, and raved like a thorough lunatic. They put this down to the working of their god Ra, and their vigilance over me of my conjuring tricks, and I so amazed them that they thought I was something of a god myself. So I joined their creed, and became a sort of minor priest.

"One night I got loose and bolted. You may bet I soon set the authorities on the tracks of those hooded hippies of Ra. The temple was blown up, and many of the priests arrested. But Ramah Singh and some others escaped over the hills, and the next I heard of them, they were after my blood, seeking revenge for the trick I had played them. I tell you, things got so dangerous that I had to clear out of India for my life. Ramah Singh and his confederates followed, and I have had several very narrow escapes. At last, at the recommendation of Tom Merry's uncle, who is a great friend of mine, I arranged to come to this school as a teacher, hoping this to elude my foes. But it seems the beggars have still got me under observation. My disguise may help me, and I'm going to be very careful. Meanwhile, Ferrers Locke, the detective, is after those heathen fellows, and I shall remain here in hiding."

"Bai Jove!" Jack Blake drew a deep breath. "It—it's marvellous, sir!" he said. "My hat! You've had some jolly thrilling adventures, I must say. If we see

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Ramah Singh, or any other strange Johnny prowling near this school, we'll jolly soon go for him!"

"Yass wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You may rely on us, sir, to wendah all the assistance we are able."

"Thanks very much, my lads," smiled Mr. Anderson. "I have just had a long talk with Tom Merry, and told him all that you have just heard. I place perfect faith in all you lads, and am looking forward to an interesting time at St. Jim's. There is one drawback that worries me, and that is my disguise. These whiskers tickle me horribly, and I'd give anything to be able to leave them off. But most of the boys of this school have already seen me, and I must keep up appearances!"

Jack Blake & Co. grinned.

They quite forgot about the jape Mr. Anderson had played upon them. Really, it had been quite a funny joke—especially for a Form-master to play! Mr. Reginald Anderson was something new in Form-masters, and of a type that the boys liked.

"You lads had better take your boots, and then do some preparation," said Mr. Anderson. "I shall be taking you for lessons in the morning!"

"Right-ho, sir!"

The chums of Study No. 6 changed their boots, and departed. They had some tea in their study, being extremely hungry, and did some prep at the same time. The Terrible Three looked in soon afterwards, and they discussed the new master and his strange story.

"Yes, he romps off with the whole giddy bun-factory, doesn't he?" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "He is a decent chap, and I like him!"

"And so do we!" chuckled Jack Blake. "He's rather a new line in new masters! We shall enjoy looking after his nibs, won't we?"

"Yass, wathah!"

And the chums of the School House departed to bed, thinking deeply of Mr. Reginald Anderson and the strange story he had told them.

CHAPTER 6.

The Antics of Andy.

THE Fourth Form assembled in the Form-room next morning eager to know how lessons would develop under the guidance of Mr. Anderson.

The buzz of conversation ceased as the whistery master himself strolled into the Form-room, his gown rustling behind him.

The Fourth-Formers could not repress their grins, for Mr. Anderson in cap and gown presented rather a curious spectacle. The mortar-board was much too small for him, and was perched upon his head at quite a jaunty angle. And the gown he wore seemed to envelop his body like a shroud. As Mr. Anderson walked he had to exercise great care to prevent himself tripping over his gown.

"Now, then, my lads, no laughter!" said Mr. Anderson, taking his seat at the desk recently vacated by Mr. Lathom. "This gown wasn't—ahem!—made to measure, and I admit it's rather roomy. But there's nothing to cackle at. Silence! What is the lesson? History? Oh, good!"

The Fourth-Formers waited expectantly whilst Mr. Anderson opened the history reader.

"We'll start at the invasion of Britain in the Stone Age," he said, blinking up through the lenses of his huge spectacles. "Now, boys, the Stone Age was rather a rotten period for those poor Ancient Briton chaps. It was called the Stone Age because there was no money about, and everybody was stony."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth.

"Silence!" commanded Mr. Anderson severely. "This is no laughing matter! Neither was it a laughing matter for the Ancient Britons when Christopher Columbus sailed into Dover Harbour and landed the Roman soldiers."

"Wasn't it Julius Caesar who landed the Roman soldiers, sir?" inquired Blake sweetly.

"Julius Caesar?" said Mr. Anderson, consulting the book. "Oh, yes! So it was. My mistake. Go up one, Blake. Now, boys, laughing isn't allowed in a history lesson. To proceed. Julius was a proper old war-dog. He had already fought the battle of the Nile, and other places, and looking round for fresh worlds to conquer, discovered Britain. So he came, he saw, and he conquered, and to celebrate the victory he built the Tower of London and married Boadicea, who was then Queen of the Britons. Boadicea was a hot-tempered lady, and led poor old Caesar rather a dance."

"The Romans led in Britain performed all sorts of useful works. They built a wall round London to keep the draught out, and directly the war was over they started a housing scheme by pulling down the mud huts the Britons were living in and teaching them to live in houses. The Romans were excellent teachers, because the British have, more or less, lived in houses ever since—when they can get 'em. The

Romans also invented a new sort of candle, which Guy Fawkes used on the Fifth of November. Julius Caesar got it in the neck at last, for his chum Brutus stabbed him where the chicken gets the chopper, in the Capitol one day during the Ides of March. Goodness knows when they are, but Shakespeare tells us all about it in his celebrated play called 'Julius Caesar, or the Tale of a Lost Dog.' Why, what are you boys laughing at?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth. Mr. Anderson's idea of English History rather tickled them. Like Sam Weller's knowledge of London, it was extensive and peculiar. Jack Blake & Co. and Figgins & Co. howled.

"Silence!" roared Mr. Anderson.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Fourth hilariously. Mr. Anderson scratched his head, and looked round him in perplexity. The history lesson seemed to have developed into a farce. Even more so when Figgins & Co., at the New House end of the Form-room, made unto themselves pellets of blotting-paper, which, soaked in ink, they propelled at Jack Blake & Co. of the School House.

Blake & Co., confused at first with the inked pellets, soon retaliated in like manner. Within five minutes the air in the Form-room seemed alive with whizzing objects, which smote the boys in their features and left vivid black marks.

"Why, you young scallywags!" roared Mr. Anderson. "I won't allow you to throw ink-pellets at each other! Stop it this instant! Yow-ow!"

Mr. Anderson uttered that yell as an ink-pellet struck him forcibly upon the nose. The boy who threw that pellet must have had a peculiar aim to have projected the missile at Mr. Anderson, who was at the front of the class. It was, perhaps, more by design than accident that the ink-pellet went its wayward course. The fact remains, however, that it did strike Mr. Anderson upon the nose, and deposited a liberal spattering of ink upon that organ.

"Grooogh!" gasped Mr. Anderson, dabbing at his nose with a handkerchief. "Who did that? D'you think I'm here as an Aunt Sally shy? I'll show you!"

And Mr. Anderson proceeded to make pellets himself, and directed a vigorous fire upon the boys in the Form-room.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake, as a pellet from Mr. Anderson caught Baggy Trimble in the ear. "Go it, sir! Give him a volley, boys!"

Mr. Anderson was given a volley. He was simply deluged with inked pellets. The Form-room wall behind him soon had the spotted appearance of a plum-pudding. Mr. Anderson hid behind the blackboard, and yelled for a truce.

"Let this unseemly conduct cease, boys!" he said severely, when the pelting had abated. "What would Dr. Holmes have said, I wonder, had he come in and found me—a poor, defenceless Form-master—being pelted by my Form? Take up your books and—ahem!—do some reading."

The Fourth Form chuckled, and took up their books. Mr. Anderson was absent for five minutes, during which time he washed his face. When he returned to the Form-room he sniffed suspiciously.

"What a curious smell!" he remarked. "Who is eating bullseyes?"

Immediately a score of hands went up.

"What!" ejaculated the new Form-master. "All you lads eating bullseyes? Where did you get them from?"

"You please, sir," said Fatty Wynn, standing up and grinning at Mr. Anderson. "I brought the bullseyes into the Form-room. You know, sir, we've all got such delicate constitutions, and need some stimulant to keep us up to the scratch at lessons."

"That so?" said Mr. Anderson, grinning. "Don't spoof me, you young rascals! But—er—it's not a bad idea, is it, to have some refreshment during morning lessons? I am beginning to feel rather peckish myself. Wynn, take this pound note, run over to the tuckshop, and spend it on provisions, will you? Providing you lads behave, we'll have some refreshment during the lesson."

"Oh, how ripping!"

The Fourth-Formers were amazed, but delighted. Never before had they been allowed to have tuck in the Form-room—not even their own tuck, paid for out of their own pocket-money. Certainly, in their wildest flights of imagination, they had never thought it possible for a Form-master to "stand treat!"

Fatty Wynn executed his mission with joy and alacrity.

Whilst the Falstaff of St. Jim's was gone, Mr. Anderson lounged back in his chair, and lit a cigarette.

Jack Blake & Co. gasped.

A Form-master smoking in the Form-room during lessons! It was unheard-of—unbelievable! Yet here was Mr. Anderson, the extraordinary Form-master who looked old, and yet behaved like a very spirited youth, reclining comfortably in his chair, merrily puffing away at a scented Oriental cigarette.

The Fourth Form could only sit and stare.

Fatty Wynn returned with as much tuck as he could carry.

He set it down before Mr. Anderson, who jumped up and looked at the assortment with an approving eye.

"Very good!" he said. "Now, boys, we will proceed to regale ourselves. Come out one by one!"

The members of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's obeyed that order eagerly.

Within the space of ten minutes, there was a most unusual scene in the Form-room. The boys were seated at their desks, enjoying dough-nuts, jam tarts, meringues, cake and ginger-pop. Mr. Anderson himself sat at his desk, with several bottles of ginger-pop before him, and a whole heap of tuck. He was busily engaged sampling both! He seemed to be enjoying the feast as much as the boys.

The popping of ginger-beer bottles and the clamping of jaws mingled with the merry chatter. This was the sort of lesson the Fourth Form enjoyed!

"These tarts are prime!" said Baggy Trimble enthusiastically. "I say, you fellows, let's all petition the Head to let Mr. Anderson stay here permanently instead of Mr. Latham. Latham never used to stand us feeds in the Form-room."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Goodness gracious! Whatever is the meaning of this?" The boys stopped eating. Mr. Anderson nearly fell off his chair, and all stared towards the Form-room door, from whence that sudden voice had proceeded.

Gasps of horror arose when the tall, imposing figure of Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, was recognised.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head, advancing into the Form-room and gazing upon the festive scene in horror and amazement. "Do my eyes deceive me? Surely, Mr. Anderson, you have not sanctioned this—this disgusting orgy in the Form-room?"

Mr. Anderson blinked round upon the Form, and then at his own table, where ginger-pop bottles and bags of delicacies stood in grand array.

"Ahem!" coughed the new master. "As a matter of fact, Dr. Holmes, I—er—I did allow the boys to—er—have this feed."

"My goodness! Is—is it possible, Mr. Anderson, that you have been a party to—"

"It is entirely my fault, Dr. Holmes," said Mr. Anderson coolly. "You see, I was experimenting on a new method of education—that of combining business with pleasure, you know. No doubt you have heard that certain engineering companies have installed gramophones in their workshops, to encourage the men to work, and the experiment has proved eminently successful. This scheme of mine is almost similar—though, instead of giving the boys some music, I have allowed them to enjoy some refreshments. I must explain that I paid for these refreshments. I'm sure the boys will work all the better during the next lesson. Won't you, boys?"

"Yes, rather, sir!" chirruped the Fourth, as one man—or, rather, one boy.

Dr. Holmes was at a loss for words for several minutes. Mr. Anderson's neat explanation rather took his breath away.

"I—I have never before had a master resort to such methods—never, in the whole course of my experience as Headmaster, Mr. Anderson!" said Dr. Holmes severely. "Need I hardly tell you that I disapprove of such methods? Your—ahem!—motives were no doubt good, but you must never again allow the boys to partake of—or—eatables during lessons. Kindly have these things consigned to the cupboard immediately, and let the lesson proceed."

The Head swooshed majestically from the room. Mr. Anderson grinned upon the Form.

"I am afraid, my lads, that this feed must be postponed sine die, as the lawyer people say!" he remarked. "Oh, well! We're here to work, I suppose. Fetch out your Latin grammars, and we'll do a little syntax!"

When the tuck had been cleared away, the lesson proceeded. The Fourth Form and Mr. Anderson were soon on the best of terms, and the lesson, though a trifle noisy, proceeded on the even tenor of its way.

Baggy Trimble was the only boy to receive a caning. He took advantage of the new Form-master's merry ways, and persisted in slacking. So Mr. Anderson caned him on each of his fat palms, rolled a sheet of cartridge paper into the shape of a "dunce's cap," and placed it upon Baggy Trimble's head. Baggy was then made to stand in the corner, and loud howls of laughter greeted this humiliation of the fat youth of the Fourth.

When the bell rang, the Fourth-formers trooped out of the Form-room joyfully.

"Well, isn't it be a scream, chaps!" said Jack Blake, as he and his chums strolled downstairs. "I can truthfully say that I've never enjoyed lessons so much before!"

"No; wathah not, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegahd Mr. Anderson as wathah a sport, bai Jove!"

The chums of Study No. 6 met the Terrible Three with Clifton Duke and Kangaroo on the stairs. When the Shell fellows heard of the doings in the Fourth Form room that morning, they gasped.

"My only Sunday topper!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Fancy Andy standing you a feed in the Form-room! It's the giddy limit!"

"Lucky beggars!" said Monty Lowther. "I think I'll apply to the Head for a temporary transfer into the Fourth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the School House fetched their bats, and went down to the nets for some cricket. They had not been at practice long before Mr. Anderson strolled up, beaming all over his bewhiskered countenance.

"Hallo, boys! Let's have a game!" he said.

"Baa Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. were rather staggered at first, but, seeing Mr. Anderson was in earnest, they gave him a bat. Tom Merry bowled to him, and was surprised to find his first ball, a splendid " Yorker," knocked sky-high.

"Great pip!" said Blake. "Andy can play cricket!"

"Yaas, watah!"

"Look at the beggar!"

Mr. Reginald Anderson was wielding the willow as to the manner born. Tom Merry sent down every ball he knew, and each was met by Andy's bat with a merry click. Quite a crowd congregated round Little Side to watch the new Fourth Form master play cricket. Kildare, Darrell, North, Baker and Monteith of the Sixth looked on with approving looks. Kildare was heard to remark to Darrell that he wished he could get Andy to play for the First Eleven.

At length Mr. Anderson had had enough, and he strolled away chuckling, a hero in the sight of the boys of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry & Co. proceeded with their cricket practice until dinner-bell rang. Then they went indoors, animatedly discussing the sporty ways of the new Fourth Form master.

CHAPTER 7.

The End of Ramah Singh.

TOM MERRY woke suddenly in the Shell dormitory that night.

No moon was visible. The dormitory was dark and gloomy. Outside, a heavy wind was blowing, whistling round the old roofs and chimney-stacks of St. Jim's, rattling windows, and causing the trees in the quadrangle to rustle noisily. Through the clamour of the wind, Tom Merry heard the loud, sharp bark of a dog in the Close.

He started up in bed.

There was another sharp bark, and then silence, except for the howling of the wind and the creaking of the windows.

Tom Merry shivered a little. Towser did not bark again, although he listened for five minutes or more. What did it mean? Why had Towser barked? Had he been disturbed by some shadow, and then gone to sleep again? Or had a marauder entered the Close, and silenced the dog by a cruel blow? Had Ramah Singh come at last?

In the dead darkness and solemn eeriness of midnight, it seemed more than likely. Should he call the other fellows because the dog had barked? Tom Merry did not hesitate long. The thought that the villain might even now be wreaking his bitter vengeance upon Mr. Anderson decided him. He jumped out of bed and hastily slipped on some clothes. He mounted a chair to look out of the window. There was a solitary star glimmering in the heavy, black sky, and he could see the dim outlines of the old elms in the Close, whose branches were swayed by the wind.

But nothing else was stirring. Had Towser gone back to his kennel? Was it nothing, after all? That was possible, but—

"Yaw-aw-aw!" came a sleepy grunt from Monty Lowther's bed. "Whassup? Who's that?"

"Wake up, Monty!" said Tom, leaving the window. "I say, I can't help thinking there's something wrong. Towser was barking, and he suddenly left off. He hasn't made a sound since."

Lowther yawned.

"It might have been the wind," he said. "Or perhaps Knox startled him, returning from a night out."

"Don't be funny, Monty! Something might be wrong."

"Sorry, old chap," said Lowther, scrambling out of bed. "I'll be ready in a jiffy. Wake old Manners up, and then we'll all go down and see."

The Terrible Three were soon dressed, and they crept out of the dormitory, with their boots slung across their shoulders. They did not awake the other fellows. Proceeding with great caution, they tiptoed downstairs. It was past midnight, and the school was wrapped in slumber.

"Hark!" said Manners suddenly, gripping Tom Merry's arm. "There's somebody coming along the corridor!"

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They listened, breathing tensely, and, sure enough, footsteps were heard approaching. The Shell juniors concealed themselves in an alcove, and waited. The stealthy footsteps drew nearer, until they reached the alcove. Then Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther drew deep breaths of relief. Four shadowy figures came into view. They recognised the midnight marauders as Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy.

The Fourth-Formers were amazed to see Tom Merry & Co.

"Then you heard Towser bark?" said Herries eagerly. "Yes, that's why we came down. Do you think there's anything the matter?" said Tom Merry, in an undertone.

"There must be!" said Herries, with conviction. "Towser wouldn't bark for nothing. Funny I haven't heard him bark since. I—I hope to goodness he's all right!"

The juniors looked round them in the darkness. Not a sound disturbed the solemn quietness of the night. The wind was still howling round the old, ivy-clad school buildings.

"Herries woke us up," said Blake. "He had been listening for Towser. It's quite likely that Ramah Singh has come, and Towser disturbed him, or perhaps he gave the dog a blow—"

Look here, I'm going down!" said Herries desperately. He loved his dog, and was anxious on his pet's behalf. "I'm going to see what's the matter with Towser!"

You fellows go down into the quad and have a look round," said Tom Merry softly. "We'll go along to Andy's room, and see if everything is all right there."

"Right-ho!"

The Fourth-Formers left Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther at the foot of the stairs, and went to the lower box-room, from the window of which they could reach the quadrangle.

Tom Merry and his companions stole softly along the dark, deserted corridor towards Mr. Anderson's room. The very stillness of the night seemed to instil a nameless fear into their souls. As they reached the Fourth Form-master's door, they thought they heard a sound. Yes, somebody was moving in the room, there was no doubt about that. They could now distinctly hear somebody moving about. Then came a queer rattle. It might have been at the window. Was it Mr. Anderson, up and about at this hour? Or—

Manners caught Tom Merry's arm again. "Listen!" he muttered. "Do you hear that—that voice?"

The juniors strained their ears to listen, and heard a low, soft mumble, as of a human voice speaking with a low intonation. The mumble continued for a little while, and then ceased altogether.

The juniors stood in the darkness of the corridor, staring in a fascinated sort of way at the closed door of the master's room. What was taking place in there?

For some moments neither of them moved a muscle, but stood with their ears strained to listen. Then Tom Merry crept forward, and tried the handle of the door. He turned the knob, and the door came open with a faint noise.

In the same instant there came another queer rattle from inside the study, and a hasty scuffle. Throwing caution to the winds, Tom Merry flung the door open wide and rushed in. Manners and Lowther were quick to follow.

All was dark and silent as the grave inside the room. Tom Merry stumbled over a chair, and then struck a match. He gave an ejaculation of astonishment when he saw the figure of Mr. Anderson lying huddled on the bed.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Tom, lighting the gas. "Come here, you fellows! He—he's not dead? Mr. Anderson!"

For an awful minute they thought the master was dead. But on Tom Merry shaking him he sat up, and passed a hand dazedly across his forehead.

"Wh-what's the matter, sir?" asked Tom eagerly.

Mr. Anderson stared at him blankly for a moment. Then his eyelids flickered.

"N-nothing," he said. "There is nothing the matter. Go back to bed."

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther stood where they were, looking hark at the master.

There was something in the way he spoke that caused Tom to feel uneasy. Mr. Anderson's voice was low and toneless, and he spoke with a certain fixed deliberation as though repeating a phrase he had been taught.

"There is something the matter, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking into Mr. Anderson's face. "Hasn't anybody been in here? We thought we heard—"

"Nobody has been here. There is nothing the matter. Go back to bed."

Mr. Anderson spoke in the same toneless voice, looking vacantly the while at Tom Merry without even the slightest sign of recognition in his eyes.

Tom Merry & Co. looked uneasily at each other. Mr. Anderson told them to go back to bed—nothing was the matter—nobody had been here. Yet, looking at the master, they could not banish that nameless fear from their minds.

Tom Merry went over to the window, and saw that it was partly open at the bottom. He looked out at the starless sky, and into the darkness of the Close. There was nothing to excite suspicion except the window, which had evidently been opened.

Mr. Anderson did not deter Tom in the least, but sat on the bed looking at him still with the vacant stare.

Tom's teeth came together with a snap. "There's something horribly wrong here!" he said. "Ramah Singh has been in here—he got through the window and out again. And he has hypnotised Mr. Anderson!"

"Good heavens!" Manners and Lowther fell back, and regarded Mr. Anderson with something akin to horror. The vacant look in his eyes, his listless mood, his toneless voice all bore out Tom Merry's swift suspicion.

Mr. Anderson was under the spell of the hypnotist. Ramah Singh had been there, and even now had his victim in his power.

"Good heavens!" muttered Manners, with a shiver. "This is horrible, Tom! Wh-what can we do—call the Head?"

"No!" said Tom Merry abruptly. "From what I have heard of this Eastern mysticism, no power can take a victim out of the grip of the hypnotist. Ramah Singh has hypnotised Mr. Anderson for a purpose. We shall see what that purpose is. We'll turn the gas out, and wait."

Tom deliberately turned off the gas and plunged the study into darkness once again. Standing there in the shadows, they heard Mr. Anderson give a deep sigh and then climb off the bed. Next minute the master was fumbling for some matches. He found them, and lit the gas. Then he proceeded to dress.

He dressed without appearing to notice the presence of the three juniors in the room. Tom Merry and his two companions watched the hypnotised master in silent awe and wonderment. Mr. Anderson was going out. Where?

Having dressed himself and put on a hat, Mr. Anderson cautiously opened the window and clambered out. Manners caught his breath in sudden horror.

"He's going to climb down the ivy! He'll fall and be killed—"

The boys dashed to the window, but Mr. Anderson had swung himself over, and, leaning out, they could see him climbing down easily and without the slightest trace of fear, gripping the ivy with both hands, his feet digging among the roots for hold.

"He won't fall," said Tom Merry evenly. "We must get down there at once. Come along, you fellows!"

They hastened away silently, and clambered through the box-room window. They saw Mr. Anderson jump off the ivy, and walk across the quadrangle in the direction of the side gate.

Tom Merry & Co. drew on their boots. Next minute Blake, Digby, and D'Arcy hastened up.

"Have you seen him—Anderson?" gasped Blake. "He's just climbed out of his window, and is leaving the school!"

"Didn't you see anybody else?" demanded Tom Merry quickly.

"No; but we thought we heard somebody in the cloisters," said Blake. "We searched, but didn't find anybody."

"How about Towser?"

"Heerries is with him. The poor brute was lying outside his kennel, stunned. Some rotter has hit him on the head. Ramah Singh has been here to-night, Tom!"

"Yes—and he's cleared off!" replied Tom Merry, hurrying forward.

"Before he went he must have hypnotised Mr. Anderson, and told him to follow. There goes Anderson; he's opened the side gate with his key. We shall have to climb over the wall by the tradesmen's entrance!"

They ran over to where the school wall was lowest, and one by one scrambled over, landing on their feet on the soft turf of the Rylcombe Lane outside. In the light of a street lamp they could see the well-knit figure of Mr. Anderson walking towards the village with steady, deliberate steps.

The juniors kept well within the shadows, and followed.

Mr. Anderson turned into Rylcombe Wood at the wicker gate, and took the path that led to Wayland Moor.

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. followed the hypnotised master for half an hour. He walked steadily, evidently with a fixity of purpose, towards the moor. He walked past the chalk-pits, through a small wood, and at last reached the old, tumble-down windmill that nestled among a cluster of trees.

"Look!" said Tom Merry, halting among the trees. "He's gone right in! Somebody opened the door, and it's closed behind him! The windmill is supposed to be empty! Ramah Singh and his gang are in there! And Andy is in their midst!"

"What's going to happen now, I wonder?" muttered Blake. Tom Merry acted with swift decision.

"Pull up the wooden stakes on that fence!" he said.

"Those are the only weapons we can use. We've got to get into that windmill and rescue Andy!"

"Yaas, watah!"

The juniors made haste to tear down the fence, and, thus armed with stout wooden stakes, they crept up in the shadows towards the tumble-down windmill.

Darkness deep and still enveloped the place. An owl hooted in the trees opposite, and that was the only sound that broke the midnight silence. Nobody appeared to be in the windmill, yet the boys knew that probably at that moment Mr. Anderson was in deadly peril at the hands of the fiendish men who had sworn revenge upon him.

"Don't get in at the door," said Tom softly. "Look—we can climb up the old sails and get in at one of the windows. Come on!"

They made a detour round to the back. They climbed on the roof of a shed, and then Tom Merry, going first, gripped a ledge and swung himself upwards. Next minute he was astride one of the large, rotted sails of the windmill.

Fortunately, the sails were fixed—it might have been by the rust of years. Tom crawled up cautiously, reached for a window-ledge, and swung himself on to it. He then had no difficulty in clambering in at the nearest window. Blake came next, then Digby and Manners. D'Arcy and Lowther remained behind to keep "cave."

With their weapons gripped in their hands, the four plucky juniors stood in the blackness of a deserted room. The air was musty, and they could feel the floorboards sagging beneath their feet.

"Hope to goodness we don't give ourselves away!" muttered Tom Merry, between his teeth. "Listen, you fellows! I can hear voices!"

From somewhere below they heard the mumble of human voices speaking in a foreign tongue. Tom Merry crept forward and found a trapdoor. He bent down, and slowly—ever so slowly—opened it. He could see a gleam of soft light, and a ladder, below.

"They're here!" muttered the Shell captain, turning to the others. "We'll get down these steps, and perhaps take the rotters by surprise. Careful!"

The boys caught their breath as the stairs creaked. They heard the scampering of rats across the floor of the room they were entering from the loft. At length they were down. They stood, waiting, listening, with fast-beating hearts, hardly daring to breathe.

A chink of light came from underneath a door near by. The voices were more distinct, but quite unintelligible. On tip-toe they crept forward. Tom Merry bent down and applied his eye to the keyhole. What he saw caused him to set his teeth hard.

The room was illuminated by candles, covered with red shades, which cast an eerie, mystic light on the scene. Two swarthy-faced men, one wearing gold-rimmed eyeglasses, and both dressed in European clothes, were standing before a large wooden frame, in which the inert figure of a man was fixed by means of thumb screws. Tom Merry realised, with a thrill of horror, that the frame was a crudely fashioned rack, such as the Spaniards used to torture their victims during the Inquisition; and the man inside it was Mr. Anderson. The Fourth Form master's face was pallid, his eyes shut. He could not have been conscious as to what was taking place around him.

Blake, Manners, and Digby crept up.

"Shush—sh!" whispered Tom Merry. "The cads are going to torture Andy in that ghastly rack! It's time we chipped in!"

Next minute the St. Jim's juniors burst through the door, and, with loud shouts, they flung themselves upon the two rascals. Both wheeled round, with cries of amazement and dismay. Tom Merry & Co. simply piled upon them, using their weapons to advantage.

A grim, grueling struggle ensued. The foreigners fought like tigers, and Tom Merry & Co. realised that they had met of unusual strength to contend with. Sturdy though the St. Jim's juniors were, they could not overcome Ramah Singh and his confederate.

"Help!" roared Tom Merry, as Ramah Singh twisted him over his knee. "Gussy! Lowther! Help—" His cry ended in an incoherent gasp, for a set of fingers, hard, like steel tentacles, gripped his throat.

Then came a crashing at the door, and it burst open, to admit D'Arcy and Lowther. The two juniors flung themselves without hesitation into the fray.

The man with the spectacles received a heavy jar from Blake's weapon, and went reeling against the rack. His head struck the framework with a dull thud, and he fell like a log, with just a sobbing cry, and lay on the floor stunned.

Ramah Singh tore himself away from the schoolboys' grip.

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and rushed at the lights. Next minute the room was plunged into darkness.

"He's escaping!" shouted Tom Merry, stumbling over the motionless figure of the other man on the floor. "Catch the rascal, boys! For goodness' sake don't let Ramah Singh escape!"

They tore through the door, and heard their quarry pounding up the steps that led to the loft. They reached the bottom, and then a harsh, bitter voice came to their ears from above.

"Back—back, you young dogs! I have a revolver, and I will shoot! Get back!"

Tom Merry & Co. halted in their tracks, aghast. Ramah Singh's dark form was just visible in the gloom. They heard his footsteps soon afterwards, as he walked over the floor above.

"The rotter's climbing out of the window!" said Tom Merry, setting his teeth hard. "Come outside. We may catch him as he climbs down!"

They rushed from the old windmill into the weed-grown garden. The moon had emerged from a dense bank of cloud, and in its soft, mystic light they saw the figure of Ramah Singh climb out through the window and vault upon one of the windmill's sails.

"He—he's climbing down!" said Blake hoarsely. "Tom, old chap, if only we dated— Oh, good heavens!"

"The sails are turning!"

With a loud, creaking noise the huge sails moved—at first slowly, and then, with Ramah Singh's weight upon one of them, swung down with greater speed.

He uttered a screech of dismay, and tore at the rotten woodwork. But it gave way in his hands, and next minute the juniors waiting below were horrified to see the form of the man hurtle downwards, and fall like a stone. His long fingers clawed at the air. It was a drop of forty feet. Ramah Singh had been flung off the windmill's sail with more than his ordinary force. Tom Merry & Co. heard a wailing as his body struck the ground, a moan, and then a awful silence.

Not a word was spoken as the schoolboys walked over to the spot.

Ramah Singh lay on the ground in a huddled heap. Not a movement, not a sound came from him. Tom Merry bent down over the man, and raised him by the shoulder. He fell back again with an involuntary cry of horror.

"His face is battered in! Oh, it's horrible!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Blake thickly. "Is he dead?"

"Yes."

The St. Jim's juniors stood, with white faces, looking at the huddled figure of Ramah Singh in the moonlight. There was a tense silence for some moments. Tom Merry broke the horrible spell.

"Let's get back after the other man, and release Anderson," he said.

Ramah Singh's confederate was just staggering to his feet as the juniors crowded back into the windmill. It was the work of a few minutes to secure him.

THE INVISIBLE HAND.

Captured.

DETECTIVE JOHN SHARPE, Captain West, and the police Chief had completely disguised themselves as Mexicans, and had not even their nearest relations would have recognised them as they waited patiently on board the schooner for the return of Iron Hand & Co.

The real members of the crew, Sharpe and his friends had hung imprisoned in the cabin below, so that there was not likely to be much trouble from them.

Presently the detective's eagle eye noticed a boat making its way towards the schooner. A few minutes later, and the outlaws had reached their destination. Then the men commenced to lift the gold aboard.

Neither Iron Hand or the others in his party paid any attention to carry the gold down to the hold of the ship.

Potsdam, Black Flag, and the leader remained on deck, and they were gloating together over their great success.

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At last they had succeeded in getting away with a valuable haul, in spite of the interfering John Sharpe.

But the outlaws did not realise what Fate had in store for them!

The detective was watching the movements of all the gang very closely indeed.

Then suddenly he edged closer towards the hatch of the cabin, and speedily kicked it, with the result that it closed with a bang.

With the exception of the three leaders, the gang were trapped below. At the same time, Captain West and the police chief drew their revolvers, and pointed them at the important members of the band.

"Hands up!" came the order.

All three were forced to obey.

Everything had happened so suddenly that Iron Hand received the surprise of his life, and it was some time before the identity of these three Mexican sailors dawned upon him.

Too late, he realised that it was one more little game of Detective Sharpe's.

The leader cursed himself for not taking greater precautions. He might have known that the hated Sharpe would not leave him alone for long.

The detective ordered Potsdam and Black Flag to go below, at the point of the revolver, and they could not do otherwise than obey.

There was a stern look in Sharpe's eye that told them he would shoot, if necessary.

Iron Hand was left behind, and the detective went nearer to him. It was some time since he had been face to face with the desperate villain.

Sharpe looked at the leader fiercely.

"Where is Anne Crawford?" he demanded in ringing tones.

Mr. Anderson was conscious, struggling in the rack. Tom Merry and Manners set him free.

"Thank you, my lad! You have behaved splendidly—magnificently. Had you not come I should have been tortured in that fearsome apparatus, and— But where is Ramah Singh?"

Tom Merry in a low voice explained how the priest had met his death. Mr. Anderson heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"That, my lads, is a blessing. Thank Heaven he met his death by his own folly. This other rascal is merely a catspaw. He'll be safer in the hands of the police. I was under Ramah Singh's hypnotic spell until he died. Then I recovered consciousness. Now, thanks to you, lads, I am saved. I need no longer go in fear of my life!"

The St. Jim's juniors and their master left the windmill, and, finding a police-constable on a moor road, sent him to take charge of Ramah Singh's body until the ambulance arrived. The other was given in charge at Rykcombe Police-station.

Tom Merry & Co. and Mr. Anderson returned to St. Jim's, and entered via the side gate.

Herries met them and inquired anxiously what had happened. He drew a deep breath when the amazing events at the old windmill were told him.

"Towler's all right now," he said. "The poor chap was only stunned. I've left him in the kennel, and he's asleep now."

"Good old Towler!" said Blake. "We'll give him a regular old feed to-morrow!"

They all went indoors and returned to bed, feeling none the worse for that night of grim adventure.

The affair created a little sensation in the local newspapers, but nobody connected the death of a mysterious native in the old windmill on Wayland Moor with Mr. Anderson, the new temporary master at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry & Co. reaped the benefit of their pluck, for Mr. Anderson presented the St. Jim's Cricket Club with a new set of nets, balls, bats, and other equipment. He did not remain at St. Jim's long after that. The Foreign Office in London sent for him, and he left St. Jim's on the best of terms with the boys who had learned to like him despite his brief reign as Fourth Form master. Mr. Latheam did not return for another week, meanwhile, Mr. Ralston took the Fourth.

Everybody talked of Mr. Anderson for quite a long time after the temporary master's departure, but few understood why he had come, and the tragedy connected with him. Tom Merry & Co. kept their information to themselves, being only too thankful to have rendered a service to the young man who had been more of a chum to them than a master.

THE END.

(There will be another grand, long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "Glyn's Wonderful Invention!" by Martin Clifford: Be sure you order your copy EARLY.)

Iron Hand leered into the face of the detective.

"That girl! You'll never find her!" he replied.

Sharpe was angered to the point of attacking the vile man who stood before him, but his old friend, Captain West, placed a restraining hand upon his arm.

The detective recovered himself immediately, and ordered the leader to go down the cabin and join his noble comrades.

John Sharpe looked thoughtful, and he eventually decided to go back to the shore.

"I must go and find Anne Crawford," he said to Captain West. "Something seems to tell me that she is in trouble. She often came to my assistance when I was in tight corners. Perhaps she needs my assistance now!"

Captain West and the police chief listened to the detective's speech, but they did not, however, quite agree with him for once. "Our duty is to deliver these prisoners without delay," remarked West. "There are but three of us, and nearly a dozen of them. You cannot be spared."

This seemed very reasonable to the detective, and he agreed to stay, although he felt somewhat reluctant about his decision.

The trio suddenly realised that they still had their Mexican disguises on, and they prepared to remove the borrowed cloths and rub their make-up.

When this job was completed they started to raise the sails of the vessel, so that they could take their cargo of prisoners back to harbour.

At last, after many weeks of hard work, and at the risk of his life, it seemed as

Continued on page 19.



A Magnificent Story of Life at Millford College. By IVOR HAYES.

NEW READERS START HERE.

TOM MACE, whose father is a professional crackman, wins a scholarship for Millford College. His father is rather pleased, for MR. BILL MACE has certain unlawful reasons for wanting to see the inside of the school. Mrs. Mace darts up her son's clothes, and Tom sets off for school. In the train he overhears a conversation between a man in a sea-green suit and a snuffed ruffian. The ruffian is addressed as SPIKE MEADOWS, and there is some suspicious talk that sets the lad thinking. At last he arrives at the school, only to be jeered at by the other juniors. Just as Lundy & Co. are fooling with Tom's things, a new master appears on the scene. He is MR. GORDON GALE—the man in the sea-green suit, whom TOM had seen in the train. Tom sees the headmaster, who is kind to him, and sees also MR. MULLINS, the master of the Fourth Form. He finds this man a snob, and he is feeling downhearted. He goes to Study B—Lundy and Bradshaw's study—to which he has been allotted, but he is roughly handled. BOB PEEL, who is friendly, and stands him a feed at the tuckshop. Tom then comes across SPIKE MEADOWS, who tries to persuade him to leave a window open, so that he can enter the school at night, explaining the consequences if he fails to make up his mind within a certain time. Tom returns to the school. Being late, he is questioned by his Form-master, Mr. Mullins, who is startled when Tom mentions the name of Meadows. The mysterious Mr. Mullins, who evidently knows something of Meadows, dismisses Tom with a slight punishment. Tom reaches his dormitory, to find that his new clothes have been tampered with. His anger is aroused, and with Peel's assistance, he sails into the ispers, but the odds soon tell upon them. That night Tom is ejected from the dormitory and made to sleep on the landing outside. The following morning Mr. Gale requests Tom's presence in his study. There, in spite of the threats made by Spike Meadows, Tom promises Mr. Gale never to speak to this man again. Tom goes to the class-room, and proves that he is far from being backward in his studies. His mother comes to the school to see her son, and Lundy takes this opportunity of insulting her. Tom is very angry, and threatens to fight the snob, but his mother asks him to promise not to fight. Lundy hears of this through Garnet. Knowing full well that Tom will not retaliate, Lundy gives him the coward's blow. Tom next proves his skill on the cricket ground, for with his second ball he shatters the wicket of the mighty Lundy. Tom then takes his stance at the wicket, and a ball from the cad of the Fourth, pitching short, rises, and brings Tom to the ground, with a yell of pain. When the scholarship lad recovers he decides to thrash the cad.

(Now read on.)

Spike Meadows Is Annoyed.

BEFORE the surprised and outraged Lundy knew what had happened he was seized in Tom's strong arms and—oh, the indignity!—was lain across the scholarship boy's knee. Tom's right foot rested on the seat of the armchair in which Bradshaw, open-mouthed, was sitting. Across that right knee sprawled Lundy, and every now and then Tom's right arm rose and fell.

Each time it fell there was a cloud of dust, followed by a roar of pain.

"Oh, help! Rescue, Bradshaw, Garnet!" yelled Lundy in one breath. "Save me!"

But there was no rescue for him.

Smack, smack, smack!

With painful precision Tom's hands rose and fell, and Lundy's yell grew increasingly loud. His legs kicked out wildly, and his arms hit the unresisting air.

One foot caught Bradshaw's head, and the "plucky" Bradshaw skipped out of the armchair in record time.

"Let him go!" shouted Garnet from the safety provided by the table. "Let him go!"

But even these brave proteés availed Lundy nothing. Not until Tom's arm thoroughly ached and the tears were streaming down Lundy's face did the scholarship lad desist. Then he flung Lundy on to the floor, where he lay whimpering with pain and rage and humiliation.

There they left him to the mercy of his chums, while Tom, and Peel, who was laughing till his sides ached, rejoined Rider next door.

"Tom has taught him a lesson," said Peel between his laughter.

But Lundy was a bad hand at learning lessons. Tom Mace did not realise that, and, in his generous way, really hoped that Lundy would see the error of his ways. But he might as soon have expected a leopard to change his spots. That Lundy had not learned a lesson was obvious by his conduct the following morning. For in Form Lundy made himself objectionable on several occasions.

He had noted that Rider was now on the opposition, and it displeased him greatly. For Lundy did not know quite how many others might follow Rider's lead.

Most of the fellows had heard of the spanking he had received, and Lundy's entrance into the Form-room was greeted with laughter. But the laughter was subdued, rather, from fear of the leader's fists. If Lundy could not cope with Tom Mace, he could "flay" such fellows as Bradshaw and Garnet.

There was great glee amongst his followers, and much whispering in Form that morning.

Mr. Mullins was far from pleased, and stated so in no uncertain words. But he could not stop the whispering. There were rumours that Lundy and Tom would fight, and many boys had decided to back the scholarship lad's chances.

"Magson!" rasped the Form-master. "You were wrong!"

"Eh?" murmured Magson, who had been intent on a scrap of paper that lay before him.

"You were not listening to me!" hooted the master. "Fifty lines!" He stopped, and glanced across at Tom Mace. "Mace," he said sourly, "did I not give you an imposition to bring me?"

"Yes, sir!" answered Tom, with a slight start at the remembrance.

"Well, where are the lines? If I remember aright, I asked you to let me have them by tea-time last night?"

"You—you did, sir," stammered Tom. "But I couldn't—I—"

The master rapped his desk with the pointer.

"Couldn't!" he snorted. "What do you mean, couldn't? Am I to believe that you have decided of your own accord not to write those lines?"

"No, sir," replied Tom. "But I was in the sunny before tea. And then I had preparation to do for to-day's lessons—"

"Yes, yes; I know that! Why were you in the sanatorium?"

"I was hit by a cricket-ball, sir."

"Oh!" said the master. "I will excuse you that much. But you have done some of them!"

"I have done half—fifty—of them, sir."

"Very well, then, do the other fifty by tea-time to-day. You can get some done after morning lessons."

And the Form work proceeded. But it was not to go on unchecked for long, however. Presently there came a tap at the door, and the page-boy poked in his bullet head.

"Well!" snapped the master. "What is it, my lad?"

"Please, sir, there's someone come to see Master Mace."

The master frowned heavily.

"Mace," he said sternly, "it is not usual for juniors to have visitors during lesson-time."

The page was grinning, and Tom Mace had a sheepish look on his face. At a sign from the master, however, he followed the page-boy from the room. The page, as usual gave Tom a cheeky ear-to-ear grin.

"Funny sorter chap!" remarked the page.

"How funny?" asked Tom shortly. He did not like the lad for he had a feeling that he regarded him as being in every way different from the other juniors. The page preferred a

curt glance, followed by a sincipient, to any sort of democratic fellow-feeling.

"You'll see soon," said the page-boy cheekily. "'E's in ere."

And Tom went into the waiting-room in which on his first day at Millford he had waited for a summons from the head-master.

Then he drew back with a cry of surprise, for the visitor was none other than Meadows—Spiky Meadows. Tom had almost forgotten the existence of the rogue; but he was to remember now with a vengeance.

"Allo!" said Spiky Meadows, rising from an armchair. "So you've come! Thought you promised to see me last night, eh?"

Tom Mace's lip curled scornfully. "I did not promise," he said. "It is not likely that I should promise you anything! I said I would see you. Since then I have promised not to see you. I certainly do not want to see you."

Meadows' face took on a nasty expression. "So that's the tone, is it?" he sneered. "Sounds all right, that does, from the likes of you—your son, of Bill Mace, the gaolbird!" He laughed, and plunged his hands deep into his pockets.

"I suppose you won't go home no more, eh? Tired o' yer dear old mother, eh? Done with yer dad! That's all right; but it won't wash with me!" He shook a dirty finger at Tom aggressively. "I told you," he warned. "Don't say I didn't! All I want from you, lad, is a little 'clap—inside 'elp'!" He winked. "You know what I mean all right. Dare say you've 'elped yer dear old dad afore now—"

Tom's eyes blazed angrily. "I have never helped my father to steal! I am not a thief! You will never make me a thief, so why try?"

"Steady!" snarled Meadows. "Steady! You're in a fine school." He looked round him. "Fine old school. But suppose all your fine friends 'ere knew what your dear old dad was—a burglar?" He grinned, and shrugged his shoulders meaningly.

"You mean," gasped Tom—"you mean that if I don't do as you ask, you'll tell all the fellows about my unfortunate father?"

"Unfortunate father! Oh, my, that's good, that is! Ain't you a clever chap!" He laughed.

Tom broke in quickly: "I will not do as you want!" His face was white, but his tone was firm—painfully firm and clear. "I regard you as a mean hound, and I will have nothing more to do with you!" He pointed to the door. "Get out!"

Meadows drew back with a start. This was indeed a surprise for the rogue. Like many criminals, he had expected the lad to do what he himself would have done under the same circumstances—given in. But Tom Mace was made of better stuff.

In his eye there was no indecision, and his finger still pointed ominously at the door.

"Now, don't be rash!" warned Meadows, half-pleadingly. "Weigh it orl up. Just a little friendly action." He lowered his voice. "An open window—accidental-like, you know!"

Tom's reply was to open the door of the waiting-room. Spiky Meadows glanced at him searchingly, then, with a muttered curse, he left the room, his hands pushed deep in his pockets. Tom followed him out. And the two walked along the corridor in silence.

When they reached the door that led on to the quadrangle Meadows halted, with one last feeble hope of turning Tom's refusal into acceptance.

"Now don't be 'ard on a man!" he whined. "I got to earn a living some'ow. I can't get scholarships, you know!"

"Well, earn it," said Tom Mace scornfully.

"But—" Meadows began.

"Go!" Tom pointed to the gates. "If you don't go now, I'll call the porter, and you'll get thrown out!"

Mr. Meadows snarled like an angry dog, and strode off. A few paces away he halted, and shook a grimy fist at the scholarship lad.

"I'll pay you!" he choked. But Tom merely laughed. Though he was much happier when at last he saw the man disappear through the gates, he knew that he had not yet finished with Spiky Meadows.

He did not know, however, that Meadows had been seen by other eyes. The school gates could be seen from the Fourth Form-room, and, indeed, from most of the Form-rooms.

At an open window of the Fourth Form-room peered a head, and the eyes were curious as they watched the receding figure of Spiky Meadows. The eyes belonged to Simon Lundy, and he was very anxious indeed to know what that visit had meant, and what connection Tom had with the man.

He was not the only one who had seen the figure of Mr. Meadows disappear through the school gates. At his study window stood a master. He had stopped suddenly when crossing to his bookcase, for he caught the sound of Spiky Meadows' voice. He drew aside behind the curtain, and took up a position that enabled him, like an outpost sentry, to see without being seen, and to hear without being heard.

And he had seen and heard much that had interested him. For Mr. Gale, the sports master, knew Meadows, knew him well, and he wondered what connection the man had with Tom Mace, the scholarship lad. Mr. Gale had made Tom promise not to see the man again, and now Meadows had come to the school! It must indeed be something important, and something into which he must look deeply.

Why should Tom Mace, a schoolboy, have any connection with a rogue such as he knew Meadows to be? It was a disturbing reflection. (Next week there will be a long instalment of this splendid serial.)

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The ST JIM'S NEWS

Edited By TOM MERRY.

EDITORIAL

By TOM MERRY.

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EDITORIAL NOTE.

No doubt you will be very much surprised to see such a feature as the "St. Jim's News" appear, while "Tom Merry's Weekly" has not even yet seen daylight. My explanation is that I simply wanted to bring out something more original than our predecessors are doing. The whole success of the "St. Jim's News"—that is, if it is going to be successful—will be due to it gaining a new personality, and striking a fresh note.

It is with a feeling of great pride that I present this unique edition of the "St. Jim's News" to the readers of the Gem. My great desire in so doing is to bring us all a little closer together by means of confidential chats and opinions on various current topics.

So many hundreds of letters have poured into Mr. Editor's office during the last six months that he decided to grant

me a couple of pages each week to fill just as I wished. The success or failure of the "St. Jim's News" now rests entirely in your hands.

To those of you who might be inclined to think that this is going to be another budget of contributions run on exactly the same lines as other supplements, I will add one word. I shall not poach on any of the preserves of my contemporaries, and will keep off the grass as much as possible with regard to similarity of articles.

Now, my chums, we've done our bit, and the rest is up to you. Put your shoulder to the wheel and see that the "St. Jim's News" has come to stay. Tell all your friends about it.

Above all, don't forget to write and let me know what your opinions are. It is the only way in which I can fall in with your desires and deliver the goods.

Au revoir until next week.

TOM MERRY.

A Walk Along The Shell Passage.

Racke & Co. at their Old Games.

By Monty Lowther.

P ERHAPS the first thing that will strike you as you look at this plan is, where's Study No. 1? There is a Study No. 1, of course. But as it is unoccupied it has not been placed on the list.

The Shell passage contains ten studies, and is only a short distance from the Fourth Form passage. But the first of the num-

bered studies in the Shell is a desolate apartment in a small blind corridor, quite a long distance away from the Shell passage, containing all the leading lights at St. Jim's.

"Nobody's Study" is No. 1, and one quick glimpse inside it is quite sufficient for even the most interested. Stone walls, no furniture, and only one little window high up in the wall are the most striking features in this gaunt room. Nobody wants it for their study; hence its name. The only use the room has is when a boy is found guilty of an offence, and sentenced to confinement. More than one boy has spent a day and night in this nerve-shattering punishment-room.

Study No. 2 contains two juniors. One, Matthew Lucas, is a rather large fellow, and quite different from his study-mate, Frere. Lucas is very fond of boxing, and has rigged up a small punching-bag in one corner of the room. Frere goes in for cycling in the summer, and freetown in the winter. Neither of these boys have very much to say for themselves, so we will pass along to the next study.

Study No. 3. Hark! What can we hear? It sounds like the roaring of a lion. Shases! Tremble, reader, tremble! We enter, and find ourselves in the sacred presence of George Alfred Grundy! A weird and wonderful scene greets our eyes as we gaze around. And some wonderful and peculiar noises come to our ears. They are caused by William Cuthbert Gunn and George Wilkins. Grundy has apparently been indulging in his favourite pastime of doing out black eyes and swollen noses. Gunn is reclining in the corner mopping the sweat from his nasal organ, while Wilkins seems to be engaged in counting stars; no doubt the outcome of a black eye.

Grundy, in one of his famous Napoleonic attitudes, turns as we enter, and remarks in a very modest voice: "Alone I did it!" Here we exit, and bountiful!

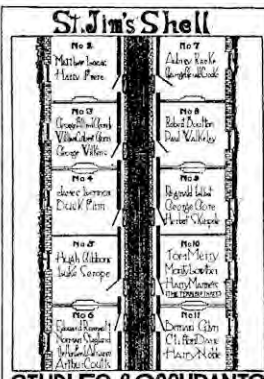
Study No. 4. In this room the Yankee voice of Buck Finn, the gentleman from "over the herring-pond," can be clearly heard without the aid of an ear-trumpet. James Lennox, the other two-legged creature in this room, refuses to be communicative, so we will pass along to the next apartment.

Study No. 5. Ah! What do we espay? It looks something like Stringer, the famous walking jasspost of the "Boys' Herald," sitting on the window-sill, smoking cheap cigarettes, and seems deeply absorbed in a sporting paper. It hasn't seen as enter, so we quit the room and shut the door with a bang. I bet the soapy individual—who by the way was Luke Scrope—altered his position somewhat when he heard it. The other fellow who shares this room, Hugh Gibbons, is out at cricket.

Study No. 6. Edouard Renault, a French bid, Norman Stagland, an American, the Hon. Cecil Adams, an affected, effeminate dude, and Arthur Coult, a cunning-looking twister, are the quartet who occupy No. 6. They are all new fellows, who only arrived this term, and the above is the only information concerning them.

Study No. 7. Half a moment, please! Before we enter this miniature Monte Carlo we had better don gas-masks. As we enter, a vapour thicker by far than petrol exhaust envelops us. It is caused chiefly by cigarette and cigarettes, hair-oil, champagne, and eau-de-Cologne. Even with the gas-masks on, our heads seem to be revolving like gyroscopes. I'd prefer the inside of a

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STUDIES & OCCUPANTS

A plan of the Shell showing studies and occupants.

THE INVISIBLE HAND

Continued from page 14.

though John Sharpe's mission would be crowned with success.

But even now the resourceful and desperate Iron Hand was not beaten.

He had still another card to play.

In the hold of the ship where the gang had been imprisoned was a large box of carpenter's tools, and the sight of these at once suggested an idea in the fertile imagination of the leader.

At his orders a number of the men commenced to bore holes in the floor of the hold.

"What's the idea?" asked Potsdam, who had not yet grasped the reason for this strange procedure.

Iron Hand gave his second-in-command a glance which seemed full of pity for such a lack of intelligence on his part.

"The ship will start to sink," he replied, "and I'm gambling on the chance that Sharpe will have sufficient humility to invite us on deck. It's every man for himself, you know—that's the law of the sea on a sinking ship—and we're about a dozen men to three!"

Most of the gang agreed that this was a brilliant idea on the part of their leader.

But the cringing, cowardly Potsdam was nervous.

"What if they leave us to drown like rats?" he asked, white with sheer funk.

Iron Hand laughed confidently.

"They won't!" he replied. "Sharpe's British!"

This was sufficient to restore confidence even in Potsdam. He knew it was not the British way to let even criminals, such as they were, to drown without putting forth a hand to save them. With this the gang went on with their job with increased vigour.

His Last Trick.

WHILE Iron Hand and company were busy trying to sink the ship in which they had been imprisoned, in the hope that Sharpe's humanity would cause him to release them,

poor Anne Crawford was in great peril.

There was an agonised expression on the face of the victim of Iron Hand. Her feet were already hanging in the water, and in a short time now the barrel would be empty, and the unfortunate girl would be drowned.

Thus would the revenge of the villainous leader of the gang be complete. The schooner, of which Detective John Sharpe was now the captain, and his friends, Captain West and the police Chief the crew, had put to sea.

Unknown to the detective, Mr. Burnett, the head of the Secret Service, was hastening towards them in the cutter, manned by Marines.

Burnett had scanned the horizon in an effort to locate the vessel which he had good reason to believe Iron Hand was employing, and his glasses had only just succeeded in picking her up.

But he did not know that wily John Sharpe had forestalled him, and had already bagged the whole gang.

Sharpe, on deck, would not be taking things so easily had he known what was going on with such feverish energy below.

The circle of holes was complete, and Iron Hand stood back and surveyed his handiwork. Already the water was gushing in.

The leader looked about for a heavy hammer, and then knocked out one of the planks at the bottom of the vessel, and a big column of water rushed in. All was now ready.

There was no time for delay. It would not be long before the vessel was in a serious condition, and Iron Hand had no wish to go down with her. Then for the first time the full consequences of his action dawned upon him.

What if his judgment of John Sharpe proved incorrect, and the detective refused to save him and his gang? Sharpe had no reason to show any sympathy towards him. He quite realised that; nevertheless, he had a feeling that his summing-up of the detective's character would prove the right one.

He rarely failed in his judgment of men. It was one of his greatest assets.

The men on deck paused in their conversation.

"What is that noise?" asked Sharpe.

Captain West and the police Chief listened intently. A loud knocking at the hatchway of the cabin could be distinctly heard.

Sharpe at once walked over to the place where the noise came from.

"What is it you want?" he demanded.

The detective had visions of a ruse. He suspected an eleventh-hour attempt on the part of Iron Hand to regain his freedom, and he did not intend to run into any unnecessary risk.

"The vessel's sprung a leak and is filling with water fast!" the crew shouted out.

He was now feeling distinctly nervous, and he was wondering whether he would be released in time. The rest of the gang crowded around the hatchway. They all waited eagerly for the detective's reply.

"The boat will sink in less than half an hour. Let us out, for Heaven's sake!" was Iron Hand's piteous appeal.

As he spoke he could not refrain from glancing towards his second-in-command, Potsdam, in order to see what he thought of his chief's clever ruse.

But Potsdam was too alarmed to say any compliments just then.

Sharpe and the others were very much surprised when they heard this news.

The detective immediately ran to the side of the vessel, and looked over. He could soon see that there was something wrong with her. She was in the water, and the water was rising, and the boat listed to one side.

"Iron Hand is correct!" muttered Sharpe. "We shall have to let them out. It will be cold-blooded murder to leave them below to drown!"

The others agreed with the proposal.

It was unfortunate, but it was the only thing to be done under the circumstances.

If the ship were going down, and there seemed to be nothing else for it, then the prisoners must be given their chance. Whatever suspicion there was against them, they were still unconvicted.

To be continued.



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